

S E R M O N S

ON THE

MOST INTERESTING

A N D

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.



B Y

CHRISTOPHER ATKINSON,

RECTOR OF YELDEN IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

T H I R D E D I T I O N.

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OF THE

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AND

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS



CHRISTOPHER ATKINSON

LECTURER IN THE

THE

OF

13/4/46

— 1

THE
C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

God's superintending Providence, and
universal Authority displayed.

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all Things: to whom be Glory for ever.
Amen.* — — Page 3

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and his Glory celebrated.

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Thanks be to God, which giveth us the
Victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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The Day of Judgment.

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to that he hath done, whether it be good

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S E R M O N I.

God's superintending Providence, and
universal Authority displayed.

ROM. xi. 36.

*For of Him, and thro' Him, and to Him are
all Things : to whom be Glory for ever.
Amen.*

S E R M O N . I .

God's superintending Providence, and

universally displayed.



For of them, and that they, and to the end
all things, to whom the glory be ever.

Amen.

S E R M O N I:

*God's superintending Providence and
universal Authority displayed.*

Summary of this Sermon page 35

ROM. xi. 36.

FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND,
TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS: TO WHOM
BE GLORY FOR EVER. Amen.

THERE is not a nobler Subject perhaps
within the whole Compass of Reli-
gion, or one that has a more striking In-
fluence on the attentive Mind, than that
of an infinitely wise and superintending
Providence. What a delightful Contem-
plation is it to behold Nature painting
her inimitable Colours, and working thro'
all her beautiful Variety of Productions!

An Almighty Providence at the same Time presiding over, and most graciously condescending to conduct the Whole. The lovely Scene ravishes the Idea. It is like a fair and compleat Picture, where every Stroke has its peculiar Grace, and all is exact Symmetry, and just Proportion. We cannot help being struck with an awfully pleasing Admiration at that omnipotent Skill, which proportioned *
“the Waters in the Hollow of its Hand, and
“comprehended the Dust of the Earth in a
“Measure; which weighed the Mountains in
“Scales, and the Hills in a Balance.” And yet, how much more admirable is that grand Economy, which so magnificently decorated the æthereal Plains, “and meted
“out the Heavens with a Span!” which commanded the Sun to dispense his chearing Light to all the Inhabitants of the Earth, and to shed his fertilizing Influence on all

* Isa. xl. 12.

all the Vegetable Tribes: which commissioned the Moon to enliven the dreary Gloom, and set off the Face of Nature in milder Charms; while she is accompanied with all her planetary Equipage, and Millions of lesser Stars, like so many inferior Attendants on their nocturnal Queen. The Psalmist, on this Occasion, shews us one of his highest Flights in the following elegant and exalted Strain;*

*“ The Heavens declare the Glory of God:
“ and the Firmament sheweth his handy
“ Work. One Day telleth another, and one
“ Night certifieth another. There is neither
“ Speech nor Language: but their Voices
“ are heard among them. Their Sound is
“ gone out into all Lands: and their Words
“ unto the Ends of the World.”* And in another Place, as he is celebrating the Works of the Creator, in Sea, Earth, and Skies, he breaks out with Rapture, † *“ O*

B 3

“ Lord,

* Psa. xix. 1, 2, 3, 4.

† Psa. civ. 24.

*“ Lord, how manifold are thy Works! in
“ Wisdom hast thou made them all.”* Yes,
consummate Wisdom, and providential
Order are brightly displayed throughout
the Heavens and the Earth. In the For-
mation of each the supreme Governor has
produced ample Credentials for his own
Existence; and in the most perfect Re-
gulation of them, a standing Proof of his
all-directing Providence.

Our Ideas on this sublime Topic would
be still enlarged, were we to take an ac-
curate Survey of that curious *Microcosm*,
the Body of Man. How astonishingly
exquisite is this human Structure! What
legible Characters of providential Wis-
dom are discovered here! What Har-
mony and Regularity do we find in all its
constituent Parts; and, though weak in-
deed, and subject to Disasters, yet how
perfect is it in the Whole! Observe that
incom-

incomparable Mechanism, which formed the Eye for seeing, and the Ear for hearing, with all the other sensitive Faculties, not to be sufficiently admired: which has knit so dexterously those several Joints and Limbs together; every one of which is admirably adapted to its intended Use. Consider the Multiplicity of Springs by which they are actuated; the continual Flow of the animal Spirits, which put those Springs in Motion; the perpetual Play of the Lungs, which expand and contract with every Breath; the Strength and Nicety of the Muscles; and particularly the Fluids, which being emitted from the Heart, like so many Spouts from the Fountain of Life, circulate thro' all the Veins and Arteries to nourish every vital Part.—As often as we reflect on this skilful Fabrick of Man's Body, we cannot but cry out with Astonishment and Delight, * “ *We are fearfully and wonderfully*

B 4

“ *made.*”

“made.” It must excite our Amazement as well as Pleasure to explore the innumerable Wonders it presents us with; which are all clear Demonstrations of a Divine Providence. And whilst we admire and applaud the Workmanship of the Building, we cannot surely forget to praise and adore the eternal Builder: We cannot but love and reverence the all-glorious Architect, while we view the Master-Piece of the whole visible Creation.

To compleat the Climax; let us reflect on that inexpressibly superior Part of us, the immortal Soul. Here our Astonishment is still exaggerated, the Mind is elated with Conception, and Conception itself is lost. A spiritual and a material Substance united! What a surprizing Composition is this! And how infinitely does it surpass the rest of the Creation!

For

For when the Bloom of Nature shall fade to revive no more; when the Sun, Moon, and Stars shall suffer a total and everlasting Eclipse; when this curious Body of Man shall be reduced to Corruption; and the vast Globe itself, with its numberless Inhabitants, shall be dissolved; the SOUL shall survive the general Wreck, and flourish in one constant and eternal Spring.—What Almighty Being then is that which has honoured Man with the Title of “ Lord of all below;” that has made him but a little * “ *lower than* “ *the Angels, and crowned him with Glory* “ *and Worship ;*” that has given him a Commission to have Dominion over all other living Creatures; that has qualified him to wade into the profound Depth of Science; to search into Nature’s mysterious Springs; to pursue mechanical Arts;

* Psa. viii. 5.

Arts; to manage and improve the various Employments of Life; and to survey all its Glories? that for these Purposes has endowed him with Understanding, Reason, and Judgement; those celestial Lamps, by which he is so illustriously distinguished from * “ *the*
“ *Beasts of the Earth, and made wiser than*
“ *the Fowls of Heaven?*” But, above all, what great incomprehensible Power is that which breathed into him this *Divine Essence*, and formed him capable of everlasting Happiness?—Surely these Interrogations must baffle all the absurd Arguments of the obdurate *Atheist*, and make the idle Doubts of the *Sceptic* vanish. The one must be utterly confuted, and the other fully convinced of the Certainty of an over-ruling Providence; convinced that the Author of all Nature, animate and inanimate, and of all Ranks
and

* Job xxxv. 11.

and Gradations that compose the universal Scale of Being, is He only whose Knowledge is immense, and Power unlimited; the tremendous Majesty of Heaven and Earth, “ King of Kings, and “ Lord of Lords ;” that “ *of Him, and “ through Him, and to Him are all Things : “ to whom be Glory for ever. Amen.*”

This comprehensive Text I propose to consider,

I. As a manifest Intimation of God's superintending Care and Protection of all his Creatures; and that there is a peculiar Providence presiding over all Human Affairs. And

II. As being expressive of what a reasonable Obligation there is upon us to adore him with constant Praises and Thanksgivings.

1st. We

1st. We will consider the Words before us as a manifest Intimation of God's superintending Care and Protection of all his Creatures; and that there is a peculiar Providence presiding over all human Affairs.

The Royal Penman proclaims the extensive Guardianship of Providence over the irrational Part of the Creation in many delightful Passages; such as, for Instance,
 “ * *The Eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord :*
 “ *and thou givest them their Meat in due*
 “ *Season. Thou openest thine Hand : and*
 “ *fillest all Things living with Plenteousness.*
 “ † *He giveth Fodder unto the Cattle : and*
 “ *feedeth the young Ravens that call upon*
 “ *him.*” And with Regard to the human Kind he thus manifests his grateful Acknowledgment of the Divine Bounty,
 “ ‡ *Praised be the Lord daily : even the God*
 “ *who*

* Ps. cxlv. 15, 16.

† Ps. cxlviii. 9.

‡ Ps. lxxviii. 19.

*“ who helpeth us, and poureth his Benefits
“ upon us.”* And he affirms that § *“ they
“ who seek the Lord, shall want no Manner
“ of Thing that is good;”* i. e. They
shall enjoy as large a Portion of the
good Things of this Life, as is consistent
with their final Interest in another. And
the Prophet Isaiah, for the Encourage-
ment of those who *“ walk righteously and
“ speak uprightly,”* assures all such that
*“ † Bread shall be given them, and their Wa-
“ ters shall be full.”* And our Saviour
Christ, whose Arguments should always
have a more than ordinary Impression
upon us, demonstrates the Certainty of a
supernatural Providence, both from the
feathered Throng that warble in the Air,
and the flowery Nations that decorate the
Fields. And he also draws an undenia-
ble Inference of God's peculiar Concern
for Man, from an Argument of his benign
Care

Care over the inferior Part of his Works.

“† Behold the Fowls of the Air: for they
 “sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather
 “into Barns; yet your Heavenly Father
 “feedeth them. Are ye not much better than
 “they?” And again; || “Consider the Lil-
 “lies of the Field how they grow; they toil
 “not, neither do they spin. * Wherefore,
 “if God so clothe the Grass of the Field,
 “which to-Day is, and to-Morrow is cast
 “into the Oven, shall he not much more
 “clothe you, O ye of little Faith?” If the
 Almighty's paternal Care is extended to
 those inferior Creatures; if He adorns
 even Things that are inanimate with so
 much Grace and Beauty; He will not
 surely disregard that Species, which
 stands at the Top of all his Works; which
 He has dignified with higher Powers,
 and created for far nobler Ends.

If

† Mat. vi. 26.

|| Mat. vi. 28.

* Mat. vi. 30.

If we observe the Contrivance of unerring Wisdom in the original Creation, we shall find, after the grateful Vicissitudes of Light and Darkness were exhibited, and the Element, Earth, and Waters received the Appointment of their distinct Situations; after the World was moulded into an endless Diversity of pleasing Forms, and beneficial Substances, and Millions of Creatures of different Species were spoke into instantaneous Life; after the whole visible System was wrought into this agreeable Harmony and full Perfection,—that God, to crown the Glory of his Works, introduced Man as his favourite Guest, for whom all this Entertainment was most indulgently prepared. * “ *And God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness; (O this high, this everlasting Honour conferred*

* Gen. i. 26.

ferred on poor Mortals!) and let them have
 “ Dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and
 “ over the Fowl of the Air, and over every
 “ creeping Thing that creepeth upon the
 “ Earth.”

God * “ created all Things that are in
 “ Heaven and in Earth;” “ || and his Mercy
 “ is over all his Works.” The World,
 with all its beautiful Ornaments, and
 vast Immenfity of Appendages, could no
 more fubfift without his Mercy, than it
 could have burft into Creation without
 his Power. All would ftart into wild
 Diforder, or fink into total Annihila-
 tion, without being governed by his
 infinite Wifdom, and fupported by his
 almighty Aid. It is His Hand that re-
 gulates the great Machine, and winds
 up all its Springs; that poifes the hea-
 venly Luminaries, and directs their
 perpetual

* Colof. i. 16.

|| Pf. cxlv. 9.

perpetual Rotations: that commissions these to impregnate the Womb of the Earth, and enable it to produce Herbs, Trees, Fruits, and Flowers for the Delight and Convenience both of Man and Beast: that rolls the circling Seasons, and appoints the sweet alternate Returns of Day and Night. It is He who informs "*the Stork, the Crane, and the Swallow, of*" "*the Time of their coming,*" and guides them o'er their watery Way. These, with all other living Creatures, are the constant Pensioners of his Liberality, and are supplied from his inexhaustible Store. But to Man in particular is allotted a large and extraordinary Share of the Benefits of Heaven. The great Fountain of Life showers down Blessings promiscuously on all his Works; but his principal Concern and Delight is with "*the Sons of*" "*Men.*" They enjoy the inestimable Privilege of his peculiar Care. Every Ani-
mal

mal that he has made is indebted to their common Lord for the Instinct of their Nature, and for every Excellency appropriated to their own particular Species: but the Obligation on Man is bound with much stronger Ties; as he is blessed with Reason instead of Instinct, and directed in a Path which points to Immortality. And, to accommodate him on his Journey, every other Class of Being appears to have been created for his Use and Service, as he himself was for the Service, Honor and Glory of his Maker.

Farther: God is the sole Author both of Prosperity and Adversity; and can in a Moment alter the Circumstances of each, whenever he pleases: for which plain and obvious Reasons we should neither be too highly elated with the one, nor too deeply depressed with the other. Wisdom, Riches, Promotion, all
flow

flow from the same common and everlasting Spring. The wise and necessary Schemes of Providence are included in all worldly Transactions. Fortune is an idle Fiction of the Brain; a Shadow formed from the capricious Dreams of Fancy, without the lightest Substance of Religion. Though Wisdom, which is the most valuable temporary Portion belonging to the human Mind, is not attainable indeed but by intent Study, and close Application, (which he who experienced the largest Share of it confessed was "*a Weariness of the Flesh*,") yet the Capacity, Power, and Opportunities of procuring it, which are the main Hinges of all Knowledge, proceed entirely from God. Study, like every other Kind of Labor, unless He pleases to crown it with Success, will be rendered fruitless and abortive. For it is * "*the Inspiration of the*

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" *Almighty*

“Almighty that giveth Understanding.” If Man could lay Claim to any Merit in himself, it might seem to consist chiefly in his learned Acquirements: but in Reality he has Nothing to boast of.—Every imperfect Excellency he possesses is to be ascribed only to that Wisdom which is perfect; and for every Talent of superior Worth, deposited in his Custody, he is to render a full and minute Account to his sovereign Lord.

The outward Circumstances of Riches and Promotion, which fall under the mistaken Denomination of Fortune, are the free Gifts of Providence, as well as Wisdom, that inward Illumination of the Mind. Let the industrious Husbandman cultivate his Fields, and improve the fattening Soil; let him sow his Seed, and plant his Vineyards; big with the pleasing Expectation of their yielding him “Fruits

“ of

“ of Increase;” and let the plodding Merchant devote himself to the busy Cares of Traffick; let him sacrifice every wakeful Hour to the golden Views of *Mammon*: the one may pursue his continual Round of Drudgery and Labor, and the other barter his Commodities to every Corner of the Globe, and yet the sanguine Wishes of them both; unless God vouchsafes to give a Blessing to their respective Employments, shall be utterly defeated. Every fair and promising Blossom shall most certainly be blasted, if the fructifying Influence of his Providence be withdrawn. Where the Clouds of Impiety intercept the Rays of this blessed Sun, that supports and invigorates all Life, there shall nothing ripen into full Maturity. For Want of this the most fruitful Land shall become barren. And numerous Instances there are, where Bread is denied to the Wise, Riches to the Intelligent,

telligent, and Favor to Men of the deepest Skill and Penetration. But let the bright Beams of Heaven once dart on the meanest Peasant in the Dale, and he instantly starts into a quite different Scene of Life, flourishes, like some generous Plant, under the gracious Hand of Providence, and becomes, in the temporal Meaning, a new Man: These are Truths very clearly represented to us in several Parts of Scripture. There we have the general Authority of God asserted in the plainest and most positive Terms. Thus,

* “ *The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich:
 “ he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth
 “ up the Poor out of the Dust, and lifteth up
 “ the Beggar from the Dunghill: for the Pil-
 “ lars of the Earth are the Lord's, and he hath
 “ set the World upon them.*” And again,
 † “ *Promotion cometh neither from the East
 “ nor from the West: nor yet from the South.*”

The

* 1 Sam. ii, 7. 8.

† Ps. lxxv. 7.

The Stars in their Courses are not concerned in the Direction of human Honors or Abasements. For || *“God is the Judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.”* In Compliance, therefore, with the Advice of the Prophet, † *“Let not the wise Man glory in his Wisdom, neither let the mighty Man glory in his Might, let not the rich Man glory in his Riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth the Lord, that exerciseth Loving-kindness, Judgment, and Righteousness in the Earth.—For of Him, and thro’ Him, and to Him are all Things: to whom be Glory for ever. Amen.”*

The Weapons of Adversity also, in all their different Degrees of Sharpness, are discharged by the Almighty’s directing Hand. *“The Slings and Arrows of outrageous Fortune,”* is an

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erro-

erroneous Term. All the various Calamities of our Condition, tumultuous Passions, Heart-panting Fears, and Troubles of all Kinds, brandished from every Quarter, have their particular Commission where to strike. An omnipotent and uncontrollable Power, is the Author of them all. It is He that "killeth and
"maketh alive," that woundeth and his
"Hands make whole." How many poor Mortals do we see plunged into the lowest Depths of Misery, who but Yesterday exulted in the gilded Car, or swam in the highest Tides of Joy! Instances these, of the kindest Admonition, to pray that a firm Trust in God may be our present Portion, and his future Glory our never-wasting Inheritance. The high Crest of the Sinner is frequently brought low, his wicked Devices are frustrated, and bitter Anguish and Remorse succeed in the Room of Jollity and Delight; all

con-

conspiring, from a gracious Interposition of Providence, to make him lothe and detest his past Enormities, to wean his Affections from the fluctuating and short-lived Pleasures of Earth, and fix them on the solid and permanent Joys of Heaven. What a persuasive Argument is here, not only for unfeigned Resignation to the Divine Decrees, but even for blessing the Hand that strikes the Blow!—But supposing a just God to sign the Commission to each afflictive Circumstance, why are the best of Christians sometimes loaden with the worst of Evils? The Answer is obvious. The Mind of a conscientious Man feels no Sting but such as is darted by his Sovereign to prove his Loyalty, to purge away all his Dross, and to bring him at last out of the Furnace of Affliction, refined like pure Gold out of the Fire. And if his Body droops under a lingering Sickness, or is tortured with
Pain,

Pain, he considers it as the salutary Correction of a tender Father, and views every Cloud of temporal Misery in the Light of an eternal Blessing. He knows that whatever Portion is allotted him by the Decision of Providence, *that* Portion is certainly the best for him, and will terminate in the greatest Gain. It is the Result of unerring Foresight, and infinite Discernment, and therefore cannot be wrong.—Let the daring and presumptuous Railer then cease to arraign the just and wise Dispensations of Heaven, because they are not, forsooth, compatible with his present Temper, or perhaps exceed the Limits of his narrow Comprehension. Let him bow his haughty Head, and humbly acquiesce in this general Assertion, that (with Regard to every Appointment of the sacred and supreme Legislator) “whatever is, is right.” And let the Christian Believer, when
baffled

baffled in his most favourite Schemes, or galled with the sharpest Afflictions, commit himself with a chearful Resignation and thankful Composure to the Will of the most High. Let him rear a Monument of humble and distressed Patience, and engrave it with the Apostle's Inscription, **TO GOD ONLY WISE.**— He calculates, orders, and determines all Things for his Good at the last. He chastises and corrects him here, to fit him for a Participation of Bliss hereafter. Let him therefore wait the final Catastrophe of Things, and he will then clearly discover both the Propriety and Expedience of all his Sufferings in this World. The Tears that now issue from a troubled Breast, will be then converted into Streams of the purest Joy, and the Heart-breaking Sigh be lost in Songs of Gratitude and Praise. The Mysteries of Providence will be then unfolded, and
all

all its mazy Labyrinths made plain and open. Seeming Irregularities will be rectified, and, in the Midst of admiring Millions, Pre-eminence set right. The whole Government of Heaven will be vindicated, approved, and glorified.— Then will the apparent Reason be produced before Men, as well as Angels, why Vice has been permitted to triumph in Affluence and Riot, while Virtue drooped in Penury and Distress: Why notorious Guilt has steered the Helm of State, while much-wronged Innocence has wore the disgraceful Chain. Then shall the Righteous rejoice indeed that they were oppressed and afflicted here, when they receive a Retribution of perfect Happiness, without any Mixture of Sorrow, Interruption or Decay. And even the obdurate Wicked shall be forced, with the utmost Confusion and Regret, to confess the Justice of their endless Torments.

I beg

I beg Leave to solicit your Attention to the remaining Part of this Subject, some future Opportunity.—It is my ardent Prayer, that you may be enabled to impress everlastingly upon your Minds what has been at present delivered. May God's Holy Spirit assist you in magnifying his blessed Name when you contemplate the wonderful Proceedings of his good Providence! Thousands, and ten Thousands of Links there are in the great Chain of Life: May you admire, and both love and adore while you admire the glorious Disposer and Supporter of them all! And in whatever State or Condition you are, may you be richly endowed with Grace to act each your own particular Part well, so long as you enjoy the Privilege of Acting! animated with this full Belief, that you are fixed there by your heavenly Father; in whose Hands are
Riches

Riches and Poverty, Honor and Dis-
grace, Pleasure and Pain, Life and
Death. "For of Him, and thro' Him, and
"to Him are all Things: to whom be Glory
"for ever. Amen."

S E R M O N II.

God the Author of all Spiritual
Graces, and his Glory celebrated.

ROM. xi. 36.

*For of Him, and thro' Him, and to Him are
all Things : to whom be Glory for ever.*

Amen.

God the Author of all Spiritual
Graces and his Glory celebrated.



For of Him, O Lord, all to Him are
all things: to whom be Glory for ever.
Amen.

Reward. That both one and the other shall be invariably happy or miserable.

in this World, I will not promise to affirm. But that they shall receive their respective Rewards in God's due Time.

S E R M O N II.

God the Author of all Spiritual Graces, and his Glory celebrated.

Why the blaspheming Wicked are often suffered to flourish and prosper, and with

ROM. xi. 36:

FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS: TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER. Amen.

away in Poverty, are trodden under-

WE learn, from unquestionable Authority, on the Head of Providence, that the whole System of Nature, rational and irrational, is upheld, governed and directed by the infinite Wisdom, and unlimited Power of God. And we may be also certain, that every Vice is punished, by the same Appointment, in Proportion to its Degree, and every Virtue meets with its own proper

D

Reward:

Reward. That both one and the other shall be invariably happy or miserable, in this World, I will not presume to affirm. But that they shall receive their respective Allotments in God's due Time, either in this, or a future State of Being, admits of no Manner of Doubt. Why the blaspheming Wicked are often suffered to flourish and prosper, act with a high Hand, and bid Defiance to all Storms and Dangers; while many of the faithful Servants of God wither and pine away in Poverty, are trodden under-Foot of Men, and are exposed to innumerable and severe Hardships, is quite in vain (nor indeed does it much concern us) to enquire. This we assuredly know, that Pain as well as Pleasure is expedient for the Righteous, whenever God pleases to inflict it; and that they both proceed from his unsearchable Wisdom, for Reasons known only to himself. He is the

Author,

Author, Dispenser, and Regulator of all States, Conditions, and Degrees of Life.

"For of Him, and through Him, and to

"Him are all Things: to whom be Glory

"for ever. Amen."

In the preceding Discourse we undertook to expatiate on the sublime Subject of Providence from the various Productions of universal Nature; from the incomparable Harmony of the coelestial Luminaries; from that curious and wonderful Mechanism, the Body of Man; and more particularly, the Divine Part of him, his immortal Soul. We then proceeded to shew that the Almighty's superintending Care and Protection extends through all his Works; and that what we vulgarly ascribe to Fortune, relating either to prosperous or adverse Circumstances, He is the sole and entire Author, Disposer and Director of. From

whence it is natural to infer that the Duty of Acquiescence and Resignation, in every State, is indispensibly incumbent upon us. Let us now further enlarge on this extensive Subject, and, with grateful and exalted Minds, consider the adorable God as the Author of all *spiritual* Graces, and divine Endowments.

Very emphatical are the inspired Languages in ascribing every Grace and Virtue seated in the human Heart to the free and unmerited Bounty of our merciful Creator. * "*Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights,*" are Words that need no Explanation. Faith, which is the Foundation of all other Christian Graces, and from whence arises every laudable Principle, and pious Action, is implanted in the Soul by

* James i. 17.

by the Hand of God himself. *||* “For by
 “ Grace are ye saved, through Faith; and
 “ that not of yourselves: it is the Gift of
 “ God.”—Charity, with all its numerous
 Branches, is nourished and supported
 by the same Influence. It is God who
 bids it spread so many different Ways,
 and extend itself to so many useful
 Purposes. This is the most *†* excellent
 of those best Gifts, which the Apostle
 exhorts us earnestly to covet. Yes, it is
 the Lord who gives a Heart to distribute,
 as well as Power to procure Wealth.
 It is he who shews Compassion the Way
 into the flinty Breast, and bids it soothe
 the Cries of the Miserable; who teaches
 it how to make Labour smile, and ease
 the Load of Care: who stamps on the
 generous Mind a Cordial Affection for
 the whole human Race; inclining it

|| Ephes. ii. 8.

† See 1 Cor. xii. 31. and the following Chapter.

to promote, as much as possible, both their present Peace, and everlasting Happiness.

Repentance also, that inexpressibly valuable Privilege, as well as absolutely necessary Duty, is an happy Conversion of Mind effected by omnipotent Goodness. It is *This* that conquers the Dominion of Satan in the polluted Heart, and banishes the bold Usurper. The black Clouds of Sin and Misery are dispelled by the Light of God's Countenance, and the gloomy Horrors of Guilt vanish. Dull Apprehension drops its sullen Aspect; and brightens into Gleams of the most pleasing Hopes and Expectations. The dreadful Storms of Passion subside in a serene Calm; the Midnight Revel is sunk in that still, Heart-felt Peace, "which passeth all Understanding;" and the horrid Sound of Curses

is converted into the Language of Praise, and the Voice of sacred Melody. The Sinner is then enabled to dislodge all evil Thoughts and wicked Inclinations, and to bid all holy Desires and good Resolutions welcome. He has Grace to hope, and Power to believe, that “his Sins, which have been as Scarlet, are now white as Snow; his Crimes, that have been red like Crimson, are now as Wool.” And in Consequence hereof, he firmly trusts that God is his reconciled Father through Jesus Christ.

I am here reminded of a very material and significant Part of the Text, which must by no Means escape my Notice; viz. That all Things are “*through Him* :” that is; all Blessings, both spiritual and temporal, that we enjoy, as they spring from God the pure Fountain, so they are emitted thro’ Christ, the only Channel of

universal Good. Redemption, with all its Train of unspeakable Benefits, the free Pardon of the blackest Sins, the marvellous Means of sanctifying Grace, and the lively Hope of eternal Glory, are all originally derived from our Maker's incomprehensible Love; but they are immediately conferred and bestowed upon us only for the Sake, and through the Merits, of our blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ. It is He who purchased all these Privileges for us, and signed the Contract with his own Blood. It is he who thus

* “ *loved us, and hath given himself for us, as an Offering and a Sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling Savour.*” It is He also who still continues a perpetual Advocate for us at the right Hand of his Father, and who will at the last great Day of Accounts assign to every Man a proportionable Allotment of Rewards, or Punishments,

nishments, according to his Conduct in this probationary State.—If the boundless and disinterested Goodness of God is visible in all the Works of Nature, and the Ordinary Dispensations of his Providence; if the divine Mercy is apparently discovered in providing for the bare Convenience, and necessary Accommodation of Man with what superior Lustre does it shine forth in this *great* “*Mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the Flesh*.” To participate every Moment of our Lives of the Communications of inexhaustible Bounty, and to have ample, free, and undeserved Provision made for the daily Sustainance of our Bodies, to be constantly reaping Fruits growing under indulgent Heaven’s propitious Beams; and at the same Time to be blessed with Health and Peace, those true Relishers of all the Sweets of Life; these are

are Considerations that claim the sincerest Returns of human Praise. How adorable is the Majesty of Heaven considered separately in this amiable Light! But the Redemption of our precious Souls is an Argument of a transcendently higher Degree. This is Goodness that surpasses all mortal Conception. This is the clearest Mirror wherein this blessed Attribute of the Deity can be beheld: an Attractive that must surely defy all Resistance: an Object which demands our most ardent Affection. Let the best Christian upon Earth make the highest Returns he can for so rich a Privilege, and yet his utmost Acknowledgments will appear flat: Here all Language is faint; all Efforts are poor and deficient. Other Gifts and Graces (great and valuable as they are) seem only as Mites, in a comparative View, from the celestial Treasury: They are but Feathers in the uplifted Scale: Redemption,

demption, of infinitely more sterling Worth, outweighs them all.

Such are the manifold Graces and Blessings that flow in copious and incessant Streams from the Almighty Father through the Bosom of his eternal Son: And such the strong and apparent Proofs, whereby his unparalleled Goodness is manifested to the World. But it is to be observed, that a full and happy Conviction of these momentous Truths is not to be obtained but by including in this sacred Catalogue a fresh Instance of divine Love; and that is, the powerful Operation, and concurring Assistance of God's *Holy Spirit*. For † “*no Man can say that “Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* And it is ‡ “*through the Power of the Holy “Ghost that we abound in Hope, and are “filled with all Joy, and Peace in believing.”*

'Tis

'Tis by his preventing and interceding
 Grace, through Christ, that we obtain
 Admittance to God, in every sincere Eja-
 culation, darted from the Closet, or from
 the Sanctuary. It is He who enlightens
 the Darkness of our Understanding, and
 directs us in the Search of spiritual
 Truths; who changes the perverted Will
 into an opposite Bias, and softens the
 most inveterate evil Habits into Works
 of Penitence and true Religion. By His
 Power we are comforted in the deepest
 Distresses, supported under the most im-
 minent Dangers, and carried triumphant
 through the strongest Temptations. In
 Sum, it is this good Spirit that fortifies
 the Soul with every resisting and de-
 training Grace, makes it a proper Re-
 ceptacle for whatever is Praise-worthy,
 and qualifies it for the Enjoyment of the
 Kingdom of Christ.

To close this engaging Account; The Holy Scriptures are a Gift unto the World, which deserves to be ranked amongst those of the highest Worth. Without these instructive Guides we must have for ever wandered in total Darknefs: Utterly lost had been all the symbolical Writings of Moses, the still clearer Predictions of the Prophets, and more especially the “glad Tidings of Salvation” proclaimed by the Evangelists and Apostles, had not these Oracles of true Wisdom, which were inspired by God himself, and promulged by his unerring Authority, been providentially preserved and transmitted to succeeding Ages.—What the feeble Glimmerings of Nature, and the languid Lamp of unassisted Reason, were unable to discover to us, has been clearly and satisfactorily unfolded by the full and diffusive Light of the Gospel. In this grand Repository are
laid

laid up those durable Treasures that are liable to no Corruption or Decay: Here is the sure Charter of all Religion; all that is worth living for: Here are the immortal Records of a Saviour's miraculous Love to a sinful World: Here the true Model of a Christian's Faith, and the fixed Standard of his Obedience: Here in short are those Heaven-directing Pages § *“ which are able to make us wise
“ unto Salvation, through Faith which is in
“ Christ Jesus:”* which are written by the
*“ Inspiration of God, and are profitable for
“ Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for
“ Instruction in Righteousness: That the
“ Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly
“ furnished unto all good Works.*

May that blessed Power, then, who is the acknowledged Dictator of this sacred History, and has *“ caused all Holy Scrip-
tures*

tures to be written for our Learning," enable us to embrace, and ever adhere to those salutary Counsels contained in them! Since we have a gracious and voluntary Tender made of † "a Lantern unto our Feet, and a Light unto our Paths," may we keep our Eye fixed on the Divine Illumination! May we attend to this infallible Directory, as to a skilful and experienced Pilot, who directs us where to shun tremendous Rocks and Precipices, and points out to us each open Passage, that affords Admittance into the wished-for Port! May all those *spiritual Graces*, enumerated in this Discourse, and proceeding unexceptionably from the good Providence of God, be rooted in our Hearts! And may we enjoy, as we ought, such a Portion of *temporal Blessings*, as Providence sees expedient to allow, and is in all Points consistent

† Psa. cxix. 105.

consistent with eternal ! And lastly, (from a full Conviction, that every Appointment is decreed by the great Assignee of the whole Universe) may we † “ learn with St. Paul, “ in whatsoever State we “ are, therewith to be content !” And, with the same Apostle, may we not only learn to be content, but render fervent and sincere § “ Thanks unto God for his unspeakable Gifts ;” for the innumerable Blessings of Life, which he is showering perpetually on all Degrees of Men ; whether they mount on the Wings of Fame, or sink depressed in Poverty’s obscure Shade ! May we often with unwearied Lips, and burning Affections, || “ Praise the Lord for his Goodness : and “ declare the Wonders that he doth for the “ Children of Men !” May we go cheerfully * “ into his Gates with Thanksgiving, “ and into his Courts with Praise : be thankful

† Phil. iv. 11. § 2 Cor. ix. 15. || Psa. cvii. 8. * Psa. c. 3.

*“ful unto him, and speak Good of his
 “Name!” For ever praising and extoll-
 ing † “the God and Father of our Lord
 “Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all
 “spiritual Blessings in Christ.—For of Him,
 “and thro’ Him, and to Him are all Things:
 “to whom be Glory for ever. Amen.”*

The latter Part of this interesting, and comprehensive Sentence, remains still to be enlarged on.—That it expresses a reasonable Obligation upon every human Creature to adore with constant Praises and Thanksgivings the Almighty Creator, is what I proposed,

2dly, To consider.

How great and unlimited, and yet how totally undeserved, is the Beneficence of our adorable Maker! It diffuses itself

E

from

† Ephes. i. 3.

from one copious and inexhaustible Cistern, into a thousand Rivers of sweet Refreshment and Delight. All Nature partakes of this incessant Bounty and smiles Applause. The salutary Streams transfuse through whole Kingdoms, communicating Happiness all the Way.— Not only the the Valleys exult, “ *and the little Hills rejoice on every Side,*” but the boundless and immense Creation is taught to “ *laugh and sing.*”—And shall *Man* then, who has as much more substantial Reason to rejoice, as a rational excels an irrational, an immortal a mortal Nature ; shall *he*, the distinguished Favourite of God, neglect to magnify and applaud the Giver of all good Gifts, the Author of all precious Mercies ? Shall *he* be ungratefully silent Morn or Even, and not waft up to Heaven’s sacred Altar, the reasonable Incense of Worship, Thanksgiving, and Praise ? Then
will

will the Voice of the whole Creation loudly reproach him: then will universal Nature condemn his Ingratitude.

The *fashionable* and *genteel Scoffer* of Religion, will doubtless ridicule the uplifted Hand, or bended Knee; and no less *jocosely* than *politely* term *this* the melancholy Trade of Prayer, and *that* the enthusiastic Rant of Praise. But let us never, my Brethren, by any Means, be prevailed upon to disgrace the least Part of our dignified Nature, much less forego the purest and most sublime Enjoyments of it; let us not forfeit this most merciful, most ennobling Privilege of conversing with Him who made us; let us not desert the worthiest, and by far the most important Cause that we have in Hand, and turn Traitors to our blessed Master's Service, for all the malignant Darts that *stupid Raillery* can throw. Rather let us

E 2

earnestly

earnestly endeavour to reclaim, and truly compassionate, the poor graceless Sinner, tho' * "cloathed in Purple and fine Linen, "and faring sumptuously every Day." But never let us desist from a Pursuit of our own Interest, nor, like Cowards, be deterred from a Performance of our Duty to the greatest and best of Beings, by the Force of a *ludicrous Expression*, or the Risque of a *formidable Sneer*.

Numbers of sacred Historians have employed their Pens in extolling the Glory, and honouring the Service of the Lord Jehovah. But the King of Israel in particular, (who was perhaps a greater Man than some of our modern Rebels to the King of Heaven,) was so far from disdaining the humble Posture of Prayer, or the reasonable Acknowledgment of Praise and Thanksgiving, that they seem to

* Alluding to the Case of the Rich Man, mentioned Luke xvi. 19,

to contend for Pre-eminence in his choicest Affections. When he would pour out the Fullness of his Soul in Prayer, how humble, fervent, and sincere are his Sentiments! And when he would celebrate the Name of God in Praise, how animated, pathetic, and sublime! He breaks out into the utmost Ardor, and Extacy of Delight, when he invites us to a Performance of these divine Duties. With a real Regard to the former, he says, † *“ O come, let us worship, “ and fall down: and kneel before the “ Lord our Maker. For he is the Lord “ our God: and we are the People of his “ Pasture, and the Sheep of his Hand.”*— And with as much Respect to the latter, he cries out, ‡ *“ O come, let us sing unto “ the Lord: let us heartily rejoice in the “ Strength of our Salvation. Let us come “ before his Presence with Thanksgiving:*

E 3

and

† Psa. xciv. 6, 7.

‡ Psa. xciv. 1, 2, 3.

54 *God the Author of* [Ser. II.]

*“and shew ourselves glad in him with
“Psalms. For the Lord is a great God:
“and a great King above all Gods.” And
again, § “O give Thanks unto the Lord,
“and call upon his Name: tell the People
“what Things he hath done. O let your
“Songs be of him, and praise him; and let
“your Talking be of all his wonderful
“Works.” And in another Place, for
himself he thus declares, || “I will praise
“the Name of God with a Song; and mag-
“nify it with Thanksgiving.”*

Such is the Language of a Prince, who
was eminently styl'd *“the Man after
“God's own Heart.”* And shall we ri-
dicule and disdain, instead of honour-
ing and imitating so worthy a Pattern?
Shall we presume to treat with Con-
tempt, or be stupidly indolent in the
Pursuit of that Employment, which the
Lord's

Lord's anointed and peculiar Favourite, which all sacred and inspired Writers, and the best Men in every Age of the World, have esteemed the noblest Privilege, and truest Pleasure of their Lives? What, shall it be accounted blind Zeal, or wild Enthusiasm, to celebrate that omnipotent Being, who presides over Heaven and Earth? To glorify that gracious Power, which preserves, supports, and conducts us through every Stage of Life? Shall it be deemed a contemptible Business to assert the Honor, or adore the Mercy of a Redeemer's Name? Terrified with the Apprehension of the Fool's *opprobrious Banter*, or the proud Man's *contemptuous Look*, shall we neglect to implore and magnify that Grace, which leads us to every Degree of Virtue, and restrains us from all Manner of Vice? Shall we leave it to the *lowest Class* of Mortals to worship transcendent Good-

ness, and admire consummate Perfection? Is it an Engagement calculated only for the *Mean and Groveling* to ascribe Honor and Glory to the most High God; for the *pusillanimous* only to rest on his Almighty Arm?—Such interrogatory Suppositions as these, O God, in themselves alone, sound like Blasphemies to thine hallowed Name.—With absolute and indignant Opposition to them all; may it be one main Part of our Lives, my Beloved, to praise God with our Mouths, and another, to glorify him with our Actions! May we ever esteem it our most real and refined Pleasure to contemplate the glorious Emanations of the eternal Mind; to revere and extol the amiable Author of all that is fair and good, the liberal Bestower of all that is profitable and convenient; to pay our reasonable Tribute of Adoration, Thanksgiving, and Praise, to our common
Creator,

Creator, Preserver, and best Benefactor!
 May we particularly magnify and adore
 the Name of the Lord our God for that
 most inestimable Mercy in the Redemp-
 tion of our precious Souls by Jesus Christ!
 May we offer up our sincere and incessant
 Thanks for that ineffable Privilege vouch-
 safed unto us in the Assistance of his Holy
 Spirit! And may the blessed Hopes,
 which He has given us of the Pardon of
 our Sins, and of that everlasting Glory,
 which no Sin shall ever interrupt, be our
 Support and Comfort here, and sealed
 to us for ever in a joyful Assurance
 hereafter!

All this I pray God grant, for the Sake
 and through the Merits of Christ Jesus
 our Saviour; to whom, with the Holy
 Ghost, be ascribed, as is unutterably
 due, all Honor, Glory, Thanksgiving,
 and Praise, both now and for evermore.
 Amen.

San. II. 17. All Praise be to thee, O Lord.

Glories, Triumphs, and all Benedictions
May we continually magnify and adore
the Name of the Lord our God for that
most ineffable Merit in the Redemption
of our precious Souls by Jesus Christ!
May we offer up our lives and incessant
Thanks for that ineffable Privilege verily
bought unto us in the Assurance of his Holy
Spirit! And may the blessed Hope
which He has given us of the Fatherhood
our Sins, and of that everlasting Glory,
which no Sin shall ever interrupt, be our
Support and Comfort now and Glorious
to us for ever in a joyful Assurance
hereafter!

All this I pray God grant for the sake
and through the Merits of our Lord Jesus
our Saviour, to whom with the Holy
Spirit, be ascribed, as is unutterably
due, all Honour, Glory, and Praise
and Fatherhood now and for evermore.

Amen.

S E R M O N III.

ON THE
NATIVITY and LIFE of CHRIST.

1 JOHN iv. 10. (latter Part.)

*And sent his Son to be the Propitiation for
our Sins.*

SEYMOUR

Native and Christian



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1841

S E R M O N III.

On the Nativity and Life of Christ.

1 JOHN iv. 10. (latter Part)

AND SENT HIS SON TO BE THE PROPRI-
TIATION FOR OUR SINS.

WHAT gracious Words are these!
Surely they must excite the most
fervent Gratitude and Affection in the
Heart of every true Believer. They
convey to us News of the highest Mo-
ment, and (without an *Hyperbole*) the
best that Heaven ever sent upon Earth.
—How remarkable is the Love of God
to Mankind in general! With what Lustre
does it shine forth in a numberless Va-
riety of Instances! How sensibly do we
experience it throughout the whole Race
of

of our Lives! And, which renders it absolutely beyond a Parallel, without the least Desert of ours, or any Equivalent that our utmost Abilities can make. “*Herein is Love,*” says the Apostle, in the Words preceding the Text, “*not that we loved God, but that he loved us.*” There dwells in Him a free, disinterested, general Love. The varied Marks of his Goodness that we see in every Part of the Creation, the visible Dispensations of his Providence, and our own Capacities of the Enjoyment of the good Gifts of Heaven, are all so many clear Demonstrations of this grand Truth. And they are Arguments that naturally dilate and expand the Soul, and tend to fix her Affections on the divine Author of all that is good and amiable.

But the GOSPEL lights up to us a new Torch of heavenly Love: That burns with

with one constant and eternal Blaze: That dissipates every Cloud that hung over the heathen World, and intercepted the wisest Philosopher's penetrating Sight. Reason and Philosophy were but feeble Twilights, in which the most skilful and wary Traveller was bewildered and perplexed. But by the Help of *This* Light the bright Mansions of eternal Glories are unveiled, and Life and Immortality discovered to the Eye of Faith. Before *This* was kindled, the distressed Sinner could find out no Expiation for his Offences, but only saw himself exposed to the Penalties of a violated Law; and read that dreadful Declaration denounced against him, "*the Soul that sinneth it shall die,*" with this miserable Construction, —die everlastingly; without Hopes of any Mitigation of the positive Decree: But by *This* we clearly perceive that he who falls may rise again: emerge from

a State of horrid Darkneſs to reviving Light; from the Bonds of Sin and Wickedneſs to the Privilege of Grace and Virtue; from preſent Woe to everlaſting Blifs. REDEMPTION is that ſacred Monument, to which the Light of the Goſpel leads us, on which is indeliſibly engraved thoſe Tidings of inexpressible Comfort to all Believers, † “ *Unto you is
“ born a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.*” Here, O beneficent God, how does thy ſuper-eminent Goodneſs break in a freſh upon our Souls! How does this ſingle Inſtance of it riſe ſuperior to all others that we every Moment experience! With what Aſtoniſhment, Joy, and Gratitude, my Brethren, ſhould we admire it! And with what Praiſes and Thankſgivings ſhould we venerate that ſingular Wiſdom, which from the Beginning authorized the Meſſiah’s Reign, and has now bleſſed
and

and honored it with the most salutary and righteous Laws! which, foreseeing from the very Foundation of Nature that in *Adam* all would die, no less graciously than miraculously contrived how in *Christ Jesus* all should be made alive. Thus, in the Sense of the holy Psalmist, * “ *are Mercy and Truth met together :*” thus “ *have Righteousness and Peace kissed each other.*” The Mercy and Goodness of the Almighty, through the Merits of a Mediator interposing in our Behalf, are reconciled with his Truth and Justice; and a firm Union is established betwixt the *Righteousness* of God, and the *Peace* of Man.

Boundless, incomprehensible Love! Displayed here in its fullest Glory! Let it not only be the pleasing Subject of our present Meditations, (wherein the strongest Description of my Pen will be far too

F

feeble

* Ps. lxxxv. 10.

feeble to do Justice to its Merit) but may it henceforth be the Topic of our frequent Discourse! For Heaven's Sake let us not blush to assert, vindicate, and embrace the highest Honour that belongs to us—that of being enrolled in the Family of Christ: Let us not be ashamed to declare to all Nations the Author of our sacred Profession; to confess before all Ranks of Men the great Master of the Christian Name. But let us ever rejoice in this exuberant Kindness of the Lord, and exert all the Faculties of our Souls in celebrating that Mercy which redeemed them.

69 — Observe the progressive Method of this great Mystery of Redemption being gradually unfolded to the World. It was first communicated to our general Parents, soon after their Innocence was lost, in that figurative Expression to the
Serpent,

Serpent, * “ *I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed: it shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel.*” It was more than once confirmed to Abraham, the Father of the Faithful; was repeated to the Patriarchs; after that, was symbolically represented to the Jewish Nation in all their Types and Ceremonies; and still more clearly discovered in the Predictions of the Prophets. What a noble Climax is here! It wants but one Step more to make it perfect and compleat. And this the Evangelists all conspire to give ~~it~~ in the best and most valuable History that was ever wrote. There we have a clear and satisfactory Account (in which these holy Men are perfectly unanimous) of the *Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection* of our Redeemer.—

Thus may be traced the Process of

F 2

Revelation

* Gen iii. 15.

Revelation from a small Point, encreasing with every rising Age, till it attains to its full Magnitude,—is accomplished and compleated in Christ the Lord.

Astonishing, and equally painful must be the Reflexion to every charitable Christian, to think of the inveterate Incredulity of those unhappy People, now dispersed over the Face of the Earth, who stood inflexible against the strongest Arguments;—Arguments that were poured upon the Ear through a thousand Channels; that were demonstrated to the Eye by a Chain of incontestible Proofs. Alas! As their Hearts were hardened that they could not understand, so were their Ears heavy that they could not hear, and their Eyes darkened that they could not see.—In Confirmation of their fatal Error, and in Opposition to all stupid Infidelity or Deism, let us now more particularly consider

consider the Progress of the divine Œconomy in effecting the most merciful Business of the Redemption, as it is displayed in the *Nativity* and *Life* of Christ.

1st. When the memorable Period was arrived, which was to banish out of the Christian World all Darknefs, Anxiety, and Doubt, and introduce Light and Peace, and a full Conviction of Immortality in their Room, then did Heaven unbar its golden Gates, and the Prince of Peace, descending from his royal Throne, disdained not to veil the Splendor of his Divinity in a Body of Clay: When he took upon him to deliver Man, he “abhorred not the Virgin’s Womb.” Then did the Son of the immortal God become an incarnate Saviour for the Sons of mortal Men. The holy Child Jesus, more conspicuous in Dignity than any of the Angelic Host, nay than all the

Principalities of Heaven united, deigned to quit the Bosom of his Father, and was wrapped in swaddling Cloaths; submitted to relinquish the heavenly Mansions, and was laid in a sordid Manger. What a matchless Instance of Philanthropy is this! What a Miracle of condescending Love! It flattens the finest Rhetoric; baffles the strongest Conception; towers above all Thanks and Praise. We find the most pathetic Celebration of this * “*great Mystery of Godliness, God manifest “ in the Flesh,*” (and which, though at a remote Prospect, perhaps comes nearest to a due Acknowledgment of such unexampled Mercy) dispersed throughout the Writings of the incomparable Prophet. In one admirable Passage (speaking of a Redeemer being sent for a Light to the Gentiles) he exclaims with Rapture; § “*Sing, O Heavens, and be joyful, O Earth;*

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

§ Isa. xlix. 13.

*“ Earth; and break forth into singing, O
“ Mountains: for the Lord hath comforted
“ his People, and will have Mercy upon his
“ Afflicted.”* Here this inspired Genius
seems to be at a Loss how sufficiently to
magnify the extensive Goodness of Re-
deeming Love. He is overwhelmed in
Extacy: All Expression fails him. And
he invokes both Heaven and Earth to
join their Aid, and relieve his laboring
Breast. In another Place also he has the
following fine Apostrophe; * *“ Sing, O
“ ye Heavens; for the Lord hath done it:
“ shout, ye lower Parts of the Earth: break
“ forth into singing, ye Mountains, O Forest,
“ and every Tree therein: for the Lord hath
“ redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in
“ Israel.”* This is a noble Figure, and
implies that even Things inanimate,
could they be sensible of the most en-
gaging

gaging Benefit, should testify it by their loudest Acclamations of Praise.

We learn from another sacred Historian, that when this transporting Scene was first exhibited, the Angels of God, who were themselves disinterested in the Deliverance, rejoiced in the Prospect of those innumerable Privileges it conferred on Man. For † *“ suddenly there was
“ with the Angel a Multitude of the heavenly
“ Host, praising God, and saying, Glory be
“ to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace,
“ good Will towards Men.”* Yes, at that Time, all Heaven rung with Jubilee: And Heaven’s propitious Luminaries diffused their choicest Influence : The vaulted Sky was *replete* with divine Musick, and resounded Hallelujahs to the great Creator ; *“ The Morning-Stars sang
“ together, and all the Sons of God shouted
“ for*

† Luke ii. 13, 14.

“*for Joy.*” And shall *Man* then, vile, ungrateful *Man*, for whose Sake alone this *Peace* was sent upon Earth, and to whom this *good Will* is principally referred, shall *he* neglect to give “Glory” to God in the highest,” and to pour out his Soul in Praise before him?—Surely No! Had any of the angelic Choir, even the lowest Attendant in the Court of Heaven, been dispatched by his sacred Majesty on *such* an Embassy, it would have justly required the utmost Tribute of our Hearts and Lips. The warmest Acknowledgments of them both would have been too cold to receive it. But instead of such an Ambassador (honourable as he would have been) when we reflect that the only begotten Son of the Father himself descended with the Olive-Wand of Peace, and presented to us the gracious Overtures of Pardon and Reconciliation, being stripped of his heavenly Splendor, and
cloathed

cloathed in the Infirmities of Mortality,
—we must be utterly lost in Love, Joy,
and Admiration: * “ *The lame Man must*
“ *leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the*
“ *Dumb must sing.*”

2dly, As the NATIVITY of Christ is
the first visible Step towards our Re-
demption, (unto all his faithful Adhe-
rents satisfactorily verified in the Gospel,
and against all his obstinate Opponents
indisputably proved by every Prophecy
in the Old Testament, concerning his
Advent, finding an exact and perfect
Completion in the New) so may we take a
still further View of it as it is illustriously
displayed in his immaculate LIFE.—
This also the same Evangelical History
affords us an agreeable Description of.
It is that beautiful and transparent *Glass*
the Apostle mentions, wherein † “ *we all*
“ *with*

* Isa. xxxv. 6

† 2 Cor. iii. 18.

*“ with open Face, beholding the Glory of the
“ Lord,”* have a gracious Opportunity
(by imitating his spotless Example) of
being *“ changed into the same Image, from
“ Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of
“ the Lord ;”* by the Assistance of that
Divine Spirit, who alone renders us ca-
pable of embracing the Benefits of the
Gospel in such a Manner, as that we
may at last receive the Reward of eter-
nal Glory.

When the Fame of our Redeemer had
reached the Ears of the celebrated Bap-
tist, the latter, anxious to arrive at a Cer-
tainty whether he was the true Messiah
or not, (or perhaps rather for the Satis-
faction of others) dismisses two of his Di-
sciples with this Message, † *“ Art Thou he
“ that should come, or do we look for another?”*
Art Thou that great and glorious Per-
sonage, whose Appearance, according to
Prophecy,

† Mat. xi. 3.

Prophecy, was about this Time universally expected by thy People Israel, before whom I have had the high Honor to be sent as a joyful Harbinger, and who art now come to enlighten those who lie involved in Darknefs, and “the Shadow of Death?”—The Answer our gracious Lord condescended to return is evincing and concise. It appeals directly to Sense and Reason. † “Go and shew John
“ again those things which ye do hear and
“ see: The Blind receive their Sight, and
“ the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed,
“ and the Deaf hear: the Dead are raised
“ up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached
“ unto them. And blessed is he, whosoever
“ shall not be offended in me.” The Life of the Son of God was a constant Scene of miraculous Beneficence; of which this Answer to St. John is one glaring Proof. How can we scruple his supreme Mission and

and Authority, after such distinguished and unparalleled Evidence? How entertain the least Doubt of his being an Ambassador from Heaven, even from the Bosom of his Father, when he was qualified to produce such powerful and amazing Credentials? How suspect him to be any other than the Lord of Nature, when he was able thus to alter and supersede its Laws? Facts like these are accompanied with such irresistible Force, that the declared Enemies of Christianity were not able to withhold their Assent. They were obliged to acknowledge that § “no Man could do such Miracles except —
“ God were with him.” How indeed was it possible to harbour different Sentiments?—When thousands of People were supported in a barren Desert, fed with a few Loaves and Fishes, which they saw multiplying in the Hands of their

Miracles

their adorable Benefactor; to whom could they ascribe the Authority of such a Miracle, but to Him who had before constantly sustained them; “*giving them all Things richly to enjoy, and filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness?*”——When they saw him walking upon that unstable Element, the Sea, as upon a solid Foundation; when the fluctuating Waves at his Command were still, and the boisterous Winds hushed into a Calm; whom could such a Power be esteemed but the Maker and Controller of universal Nature, the Governor of the World, and all that is therein?—When the sightless Eye-Ball was purged of its stubborn Film, and the chearful Light of Day shed instantaneously upon it; when the Lamè could forsake his Crutch, and exult with Vigor unknown to him before; when new and grateful Sounds broke in upon the bolted Ear; and

and when the Tongue, long confined, even from its first Formation, was set at Liberty, and taught to sing for Joy; whom can we suppose to have so astonishingly harmonized those Limbs and Organs, but that omnipotent Being who first spoke them into Life; "*who maketh sore, and bindeth up, woundeth, and his Hands make whole?*"—In a Word; when he did not only restore the Sick to Health, but re-animate the Dead, and compel the voracious Grave to make Restitution; surely we cannot doubt that God then visited his People, and proved himself the sole Author of Life, by thus mercifully prolonging, and miraculously restoring it.

Had Injury and Oppression been the Motives of our Saviour's Miracles, we should have had some Room to doubt whether they proceeded from Divine Authority?

Authority? But instead of this, they relieved the Body from Pain and Disease, and disburthened the Mind of Doubt and Anxiety. They removed the Miseries, and promoted the Happiness of Mankind.

74-76- The great Shepherd of Israel, out of that singular Tendernefs and Regard, which he maintained for his Flock, **“went about doing good:”* It was the constant Business of his Life. His coming into the World, and his Conduct during his Residence in it, were evidently founded upon a beneficent Intention. No Prejudice or selfish Views appeared in any Part of his Character. His Life was an original Picture of the most disinterested Benevolence, and the noblest Friendship. It was his incessant Care not only to plant in the Heart of Man a Spirit of universal

* Acts x. 23.

versal Harmony and Love, to excite him by the most persuasive Arguments to a Performance of good and laudable Actions, and thereby to render his State as happy as its Nature here will admit of; but more especially to admonish Sinners of Repentance; to convince them that, on this Condition, he would plead in their Behalf before the heavenly Judge, and obtain for them a full Remission of their Sins, and “*everlasting Life after Death.*” To secure this Point was the ultimate Design of his Appearance upon Earth. It was the great Scope of all he said, did, and suffered.

Another Part worthy to be observed in this engaging History, is, that the Son of God was native Innocence itself; § “*did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.*” Whatever Provocations

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for

for Revenge he met with from an ungrateful World, no unbecoming Expression escaped him, no injurious Return ever sullied the Purity of his Godhead. But * “ *when he was reviled, he reviled not* “ *again: when he suffered, he threatened* “ *not.*”—The *active* Graces also, as well as *passive*, accompanied and adorned his whole Life. That Law, the least Breach of which condemns without Mercy, He was actually subject and obedient to. This is an unspeakable Benefit to a sinful and depraved World. For his all-meritorious Righteousness shall be imputed to his faithful Servants, and his perfect Obedience to their sincere, though weak and defective Services. An Apostle, than whom none was ever a greater Advocate for the Christian Religion, verifies this Truth. † “ *For as by one Man's Disobedience many were made Sinners, so by the* “ *Obedience*

* 1 Pet. ii. 23.

† Rom. v. 19.

“ Obedience of one shall many be made Righteous.” And again; † “ He was made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.”

The last Thing I would take Notice of in the Life of our blessed Redeemer, is, that he gave us a *new and everlasting Covenant*. That Part of the *Mosaic Dispensation*, which consisted in painful Rites, and (if we exclude the divine Sanction) mere unprofitable Ceremonies, He totally abrogated; and instead thereof promulged an holy, wise, and rational Law, to be observed and revered for ever by the Professors of the Christian Faith. Thus † “ *hath he obtained a more excellent Ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better Covenant, which was established upon better Promises.*” It is this Covenant

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† Gal. iv. 4, 5.

‡ Heb. viii. 6.

nant which reveals to us the Nature of ourselves, and our Affinity with God ; which shews us at once the Force of our Obligation to Him, and the Reasonableness, as well as Particulars of our Duty. Here the Excellence of our holy Religion is a shining Proof of its incomparable Author. We are here not only excited, encouraged, and commanded to depend upon, and confide in, the Power of Grace and Providence, but we are taught also that such a Dependence is but Weakness, and such a Confidence Presumption, as is not accompanied with an unaffected Sanctity of Life. By this sacred League we are bound both to love and to fear our Maker ; to reverence his holy Name and his Word ; and to serve him with Constancy and Fidelity, in Righteousness and in Truth. We are required likewise to regulate and subdue our vicious Tempers, and to nourish and improve virtuous Habits,

Habits, and good Dispositions. And we are also instructed, admonished, and assisted, under the Direction of that blessed Spirit, without which our best Endeavours will certainly be frustrated, to cultivate all the Graces of the social Life.

——Such are the Injunctions included in that Covenant of “*Grace and Truth, which came by Jesus Christ;*” Injunctions, the peculiar Nature and singular Excellence of which fully proclaim that we are taught of God.

But since it is almost impossible for human Frailty to be perpetually guarded against all the subtle Attacks of Vice, and live up to the constant Practice of every Virtue, there is yet another very material Privilege attending this divine Covenant: *viz.* that God will accept the Services of a sincere and well disposed Heart, instead of an unblemished Innocence, and of our

general good Intentions and Endeavours (weak as they are) instead of an absolute, unerring Obedience. And when the distressed Sinner, who has repeatedly violated the Laws of God, bending under the almost insupportable Burthen of Sin and Guilt, becomes truly penitential, abhors and forsakes his Vices, and resolves for the future to adhere closely to his Duty, he shall, by Virtue of this Covenant, be restored to Pardon, and, thro' the all-sufficient Merits of his Saviour, be at last intitled to those glorious Rewards, that are appointed for all humble Penitents.

Inference

May the Almighty God then make us truly sensible both of this and all other Benefits accruing to us from the *Incarnation* of our Lord!——May we be equally affected with that stupendous Goodness, which bowed from the Height
of

of infinite Exaltation to the lowest Abasement, and that most detestable unworthiness which required it!—May we from henceforth delight in Nothing so much as true Piety, and utterly detest every Degree of Sin! Recollecting that it was this alone which involved us in so immense a Debt, as nothing less than a Power of infinite Dignity could cancel; no less a Personage than God's only Son be a *Propitiation* for. And finally, may we be endowed with Grace to express all the Gratitude to our Saviour that we possibly can, by following the Example set before us in his most holy and immaculate LIFE!——All this I pray God grant for the Sake and thro' the Merits of the same Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all Honor, Glory, and Praise, both now and for evermore! Amen.

S E R M O N I V .
O N T H E
C R U C I F I X I O N .

1 C O R . i i . 2 .

*For I determined not to know any Thing
among you, &c.*

SERMON IV.
ON THE
CRUCIFIXION.



For I desire to know every thing
among you, &c.

S E R M O N. IV.
On the CRUCIFIXION.

1 C O R. ii. 2.

FOR I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANY
THING AMONG YOU, SAVE JESUS
CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

THE Article of *original Sin* is one
requisite and essential Point to be
maintained in the Doctrine of Christi-
anity. The Disobedience of our general
Parents is chargeable upon their whole
Offspring. This is a Truth with which
the holy Scriptures are replete, and
which they allow us not the least Room
to contest. A Person infallible as well
as ingenuous in his Sentiments, (though
distinguished

distinguished for his Piety and Holiness) has left this Confession to all Posterity :

* “ *Behold I was shapen in Wickedness :
“ and in Sin hath my Mother conceived
“ me.*” And the Author to the Romans acknowledges, that † “ *by one Man Sin
“ entered into the World, and Death by
“ Sin; and so Death passed upon all Men,
“ for that all have sinned.*”

Every Man's own Conscience, upon a strict and impartial Scrutiny, will find itself obliged to concur with the Evidence of these inspired Men. Let us resolutely throw off every Mask that intercepts our View to the *Heart*, this secret Engine of all Devices, and we shall no longer scruple the Depravity of our own Nature. *There* we shall discover a natural Aversion to whatever is Good, and a strong Propensity to all Kinds of Evil.

We

* Psa. li. 5.

† Rom. v. 12.

We shall there see a Number of tyrannical and unbridled Passions contending for Mastership, and, like an impetuous Deluge, bearing down all before them. There dwells fantastic Pride with its supercilious Mien, impiously disdaining, and deservedly disdained by all. There odious Lust figures out its various Forms; meditates the Midnight Revel, plots the Ruin of unguarded Innocence, or nourishes the base Idea of hoarding its useless Thousands, for the Want of which Thousands perish. From thence does savage Malice dart its Scorpion-Sting; and fell-mouthed Scandal spit all its Venom. There the barbarous Assassin's Schemes are invented, and prepared for Execution: And there the artful Sycophant forms his perfidious Smiles, —Daggers to the Mind that they betray, as sure as the Assassin's are to the Life they murder.

Dismal

Dismal and melancholy is this descriptive Scene of the human Heart: And yet a just Representation of its real natural State.—Involved in this complicated Distress, thus prone to Sin and Guilt, and seeing nothing but Misery and Destruction before us, how greatly does it become us to be sincerely thankful for that ample Provision made for our Recovery by Jesus Christ! The Ruin incurred upon us by *Adam* was by *our Saviour* totally disannulled. If the former by Transgression fell, and entailed Misery upon his whole Race, the perfect Righteousness of the latter has restored their Rectitude; and by his Sufferings and Crucifixion, he has purchased eternal Happiness for his true Disciples. The Almighty so loved the World, which his own Hands had fashioned, that he would not suffer its noblest Inhabitant to perish, but thus offered him the gracious Means
of

of obtaining Pardon and Reconciliation. He even *spared not his own Son*, but freely gave him up to be a Sacrifice for our Sins. What an awful, what an astonishing Instance of Divine Mercy was this! Our Apostle entertained the most grateful and exalted Notions of it. Tho' he had been trained up *at the Feet of Gamaliel*; tho' he excelled many of his Cotemporaries in the *Jewish Religion*, and had also made a considerable Proficiency in the Learning of the *Gentiles*; yet he was so far from glorying in such Acquisitions, or setting any extraordinary Value upon them, that he *counted all Things but Loss* in a comparative View *with the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ*. He wanted not to lay Claim to any other Kind of Wisdom than that to which he had attained by becoming a *Christian*. He wisely *determined* not to value himself on any Accomplishments but

but the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, and *him crucified*.

This noble Resolution of St. Paul is evidently grounded on a full Conviction of the Benefits which we receive from the Death of our Redeemer: Benefits infinitely surpassing all others, from whatever Spring they flow. The *Cross* is the Foundation of every Privilege belonging to Christianity: It is the Supporter of every earthly Comfort; the Pillar to all Distress. And, if attended with its proper Influence, it cannot fail to unite us in the general Cause of true Religion.

It is therefore my present Design to shew,

1st, How conspicuously the Goodness of God is displayed in a crucified Saviour.—And

2^{dly},

2dly, What profitable Instructions we should deduce from this stupendous and unequalled Proof of Divine Compassion.

1st, Let us consider, how conspicuously the Goodness of God is displayed in a crucified Saviour.

This is that tragical, but ever memorable Scene in the grand Christian Aera, which should be always open to the Eye of the Mind, and to which it cannot be too often represented. Had *this* Part been omitted in the sacred Drama, Man would still have wanted a compleat Saviour, and the valuable Act of Redemption broke off unfinished. But the blessed Oracles of Inspiration have given us repeated and incontestible Proofs of *Christ crucified*. Otherwise, indeed, a Favor of so singular a Kind must have staggered our Belief. Authors of indu-

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bitable

bitable Veracity, and incapable of Mistake, have assured us that the great IMMANUEL, who sways the righteous Sceptre, and crowns the radiant Heavens with all their resplendent Glories, not only vouchsafed to be the Messenger of his Father's unspeakable Love to Mankind, assumed a Body of animated Clay, and became subject to all its Infirmities (Sin excepted;) not only bowed to the Yoke of the Law, and spent his Life in the lowest Degree of Humiliation and Abasement; but was even treated with the utmost Indignation, Cruelty, and Contempt; nay more, was reviled and persecuted as a common Malefactor, and, in that infamous Character,—expired on the detested Tree.

Thus He, who, according to the expressive Gradation of the Apostle,
 * “ *thought it not Robbery to be equal with*
“ God;

“ *God; made himself of no Reputation, and*
 “ *took upon him the Form of a Servant, and*
 “ *was made in the Likeness of Men: And*
 “ *being found in Fashion as a Man, he hum-*
 “ *bled himself, and became obedient unto*
 “ *Death, even the Death of the Cross.*”—

And thus he became a propitiatory Sacrifice for our Sins. Thus did the Prince of Life die for his wicked Subjects; die even for those Traitors, whose Swords were imbrued in his precious Blood.— Astonishing, unfathomable Abyss of Mercy! Did ever Grace soar so high, or stoop so low? This is Goodness beyond a Parallel indeed. It beggars all Description.—Admire, ye Heavens! Be all Attention, thou Earth! Exult and give Thanks, ye Inhabitants thereof! Pour out all your Souls in Praise for their Redemption; and make the best Returns you can to Him, who, for your Sakes, endured the bloody Scourge,—was ex-

tended on the execrable Cross,——there hung in lingering and exquisite Tortures,——and, at last, resigned to the horrid Mansions of the Grave.

Say, was there no other Expedient than that of spilling the Blood of God's own Son, to wash out the Dye of primitive Pollution? Could not the legal Rites of the Mosaic Dispensation, the paschal Lamb, the Blood of Bullocks and of Goats, thousands of Rams, or ten thousands of Rivers of Oil; could none of these Oblations atone for Man's foul Offence?——No; they stood only for emblematic Types, prefiguring the great Antitype, the Lamb of God, and were of no real Effect in the Expiation of Sin.——What then? Might not the Sacrifice of our First-born, the beloved Offspring of our Bodies, compensate for the Sin of our Souls?——This would only be an Aggravation

gravation of our Guilt, which a just and incensed God would reject with Abhorrence.—Should we ourselves then fall prostrate before him, and be ready to resign our own Lives to ward off the Stroke of Almighty Wrath?—This would be to suffer the Punishment, not to redress the Injury.—Could all the Saints of Heaven, by offering to forego their Bliss, and devoting their cœlestial Glories to the Service and Restoration of Man, set void the heavy Charge?—Even this, in a comparative Light, would be a trivial Commutation for the Jehovah's injured Honor.—The Guilt of Man is so notoriously flagrant and inexcusable, that nothing less than a Victim of inestimable Price could purchase Reconciliation and Forgiveness. He, who existed from all Eternity; who hung the æthereal Arch, and first led the Sun out of his golden Gates; who out of Nothing reared the

Mountain's lofty Head, and *set Bars to the proud Waves of the Ocean*; He, who created Man after his own Similitude, pure and upright; who blest him with Peace and Plenty, made him Master of the World before him, and placed him in the most delightful Situation in it;—*He* was sacrificed for the Work of his own Hands; the Disobedience of his own Children: It was He who submitted to the most abject Slavery, that we might be made free,—to the extremest Misery, that we might be happy,—to the most agonizing and ignominious Death, that we might live for ever.

We have this great Event described by the Prophet Isaiah in the strongest and most pathetic Terms. || “*He is despised*” (says that admirable Writer) *and rejected of Men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted*

“ acquainted with Grief: and we hid as it
 “ were our Faces from him: he was despised
 “ and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath
 “ borne our Grievs, and carried our Sor-
 “ rows: yet we did esteem him stricken,
 “ smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was
 “ wounded for our Transgressions, he was
 “ bruised for our Iniquities: the Chastise-
 “ ment of our Peace was upon him; and
 “ with his Stripes we are healed. All we,
 “ like Sheep, have gone astray; we have
 “ turned every one to his own Way: and the
 “ Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us
 “ all. He was oppressed, and he was af-
 “ flicted, yet he opened not his Mouth: he is
 “ brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter; and
 “ as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so
 “ he openeth not his Mouth. He was taken
 “ from Prison and from Judgment: and
 “ who shall declare his Generation? for he
 “ was cut off out of the Land of the living:
 “ for the Transgression of my People was he
 H 4 “ stricken.

*“stricken. And he made his Grave with
 “the wicked, and with the rich in his
 “Death; because he had done no Violence,
 “neither was any Deceit in his Mouth.”*

What an affecting Tragedy have we here! Represented in all the matchless Eloquence of Pity! And the happiest for that vile Apostate, Man, that was ever acted on the open Theatre of the World. It reconciles the strict Justice and inviolable Veracity of God (which had denounced inevitable Destruction “on
 “every Soul that doth Evil”) with Mercy and Forgiveness of Sins. It makes all his glorious Attributes perfectly harmonize one with another. The Sinner is absolved, and yet the Truth of God vindicated. So that it is difficult to determine whether the Glory of the Creator, or the Benefit of the Creature, is more signally displayed in the Cross of Christ.

Our

Our Divine Master gained a more absolute Conquest at *Mount Calvary*, than if he had stretch'd out his vindictive Arm, and levelled his Adversaries on every Side. For *there* Death was disarmed of its mortal Sting; and all the Powers of Hell were swallowed up in Victory. And *there* too were the Bonds of Sin broken, and Numbers infinite of its perishing Slaves snatched from the Brink of Ruin.

Thus conspicuously is the Goodness of God displayed in our Saviour's Crucifixion. He has hereby purchased for every faithful and sincere Penitent, Remission of Sins, and reinstated him in a Capacity of saving his immortal Soul. This makes the Death of a Redeemer appear to be almost the only Circumstance in the Christian Religion worthy of our Regard. It is however a Subject of inexpressible

expressible Importance to Mankind. It is the sweet Enlivener of all our Hopes here, and the Foundation of all our spiritual Interests hereafter.

O praise then the Lord, ye his Servants, and with unfeigned Gratitude adore him for all his Benefits! Praise him, * “*who*
 “*forgiveth all your Sin: and thus healeth*
 “*all your Infirmities; who saveth your Life*
 “*from Destruction; and crowneth you*
 “*with Mercy and loving Kindness.*” Yes,
 † “*Let every Creature which is in Heaven,*
 “*and on the Earth, say, Blessing, and Honor,*
 “*and Glory, and Power be unto Him that*
 “*sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the*
 “*Lamb, that was slain, for ever and ever.*”

Let us now consider,

2dly, What profitable Instructions we ought to deduce from so solemn a Subject,

* Psa. ciii. 3, 4.

† Rev. v. 13.

ject, and so stupendous an Instance of Divine Compassion.

First: Allow me to observe, that a crucified Lord sets the Malignity and Odiousness of SIN in its own proper Light: And consequently it is the most probable Argument that can be urged to deter us from the Commission of it. How brightly does the *Wisdom*, as well as *Mercy* of the eternal Godhead shine in this Appointment! His having taken such a Method as *this* to testify his Indignation against Sin, and at the same Time to vindicate the Honor of his Laws, must surely induce us to abhor the one, and excite our utmost Diligence in proving that we maintain a due Regard for the other. — Numbers of Instances are recorded in Scripture of the dreadful Effects of God's heavy Displeasure and avenging Justice incurred by Sin. Was it not Sin that
brought

brought all those numerous Plagues upon Egypt, with which that unhappy Country was so much infested; that slew all the first-born in the Land; and, at last, overthrew its King with all his Hosts in the red Sea? Was it not the noxious Breath of Sin that blasted all the Fruits of *Ahi-thophel's* profound Politicks and subtle Schemes; and brought *Him* likewise to an untimely Exit? And did not the miserable Death of *Herod*, and that of *Judas*, more miserable still, proceed from the same Cause?—But why do I recite only particular Instances?—Was it not Sin alone that sunk *Adam* and his whole Posterity into a State of Woe? Is not This the only Spark that has kindled Cities into the Flames, and consumed them into Ashes? Has it not been the Ruin of Republics, and the Bane of Kingdoms? Nay, What else but this same pernicious Evil was it that brought a Deluge upon
the

the World itself, which destroyed every human Creature, *except eight Persons*, who were Servants of God, and Lovers of Righteousness?—And yet what is all this,—what is the Destruction of a whole World, when compared with the Ravage it made upon the *Cross*? There its Triumph was great indeed! All the united Miseries it has been the Parent of, since its own Birth in Paradise, afford not so dreadful and yet so lively a Representation of its malignant Nature, as that awful Scene does, which was there exhibited. It was there that the adorable Son of God himself groaned under the Burthen of Man's Iniquity. There the holy Jesus, the only innocent Person that ever appeared in human Form, was slain for the Guilty: *And he who knew no Sin, was there made Sin for us.*—Let us therefore, my Brethren, endeavour to fortify our Souls with the strongest and most approved
Armour,

Armour, such as *Prayer, Faith, and Grace*, against all the open Attacks, or perfidious Insinuations of this powerful Enemy. For though it frequently offers Pleasure in Hand, yet this is not only transitory and delusive, but such as is sure to be followed by the most painful Reflexions. Depend upon it, it is a Viper which never fails to sting the Breast that it inhabits. And is not this alone a sufficient Reason for resolving to resist all its winding Arts, and guarding against a Traitor that would involve us in so much Misery? But can we forbear beholding it with the utmost Indignity and Abhorrence, when we further reflect that it brought down the Prince of Heaven from above, divested him of his cœlestial Splendor, and nailed him to the ignominious Tree? To which if we still add the Dread of those eternal Torments, which Conscience opens to the Idea beyond this terrestrial Scene, and
which

which will be the inevitable Consequence of unrepented-of Sin, surely we cannot help looking upon it in this Light as Man's greatest Enemy, and shall therefore avoid it with utter Loathing, Resentment, and Aversion.

Secondly: Let me entreat you to reflect that the Crucifixion of our Lord demands a Tribute of the most fervent and affectionate *Gratitude*; to be attested by an implicit *Obedience* to his Divine Will. Gratitude in general, though it is but a *reasonable* Duty, and the least Debt we can pay for Benefits received, is yet a Principle of a most engaging Nature. And we find it no where but in the generous and well cultivated Mind. This is the Soil in which it always takes Root and flourishes. When a Man of this amiable Disposition would discharge the Fullness of his glowing Heart, it is natural
for

for him to address himself in such Language as this:—"How inexpressibly am I oblig'd? And how must I ever make a suitable Recompence?"—If an Acknowledgement then, like this, is due from one Creature only to another;—if an *earthly* Benefactor has a Right to expect the sweet Returns of Gratitude and Love,—how much more are they due to *Him*, who is the supreme Benefactor of all; who is our Creator, our Preserver, our Redeemer! What transcendently grateful Acknowledgments,—what ardent, what singular Returns of dutiful Affection do penitent Sinners owe to Him, who has expiated their Sins by the Sacrifice of Himself! And must not the coldest Breast kindle into divine Love upon such a Reflection as this, "CHRIST, the Fountain of all Existence, the Image of the invisible God, expired on a Cross for the Sake of Man?"

May

Lives then declare the good Disposition of our Hearts. And let us make it evident how much that most amiable Name under Heaven, that is given unto Man, is the Object of our Esteem, by devoting ourselves to his Honor and Service. Let us not only from henceforth *cease to do Evil*, but *learn to do well*: not only renounce Iniquity, but adorn Christianity: not only *deny all Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts*; but endeavour *to live soberly, righteously and godly in this evil World*.

If the Time would admit of it, I might further enforce the Subject before us as an irresistible Argument of *Meekness, Patience, Humility*, and an universal *brotherly Love*. I might observe, that the inoffensive Conduct of the dispassionate Saviour, under so many severe Trials of Scorn and Indignities, should teach us to conquer the Virulence of evil Tongues
by

by Dint of that § “*meek and quiet Spirit,*
“*which is in the Sight of God of great*
“*Price.*” I might also observe, that a
proper Reflexion on the Miseries which
He sustained (and which formed one con-
tinued Scene of suffering) should ani-
mate and support Us under all the va-
rious Distresses, Pains, and Persecutions,
that Flesh is Heir to. I might likewise
take Notice, that the mean and humble
State of our Lord and Master should con-
vince us that “Pride was not made for
“Man,” and correct our mistaken Fond-
ness for what the World calls *Great* and
Honorable. To which I might well add,
that the Behaviour of the compassionate
Jesus is, in all Instances of it, a shining
Example of perfect and uncorrupted
Charity: I might remind you how much
it is your Duty, in Imitation of this
GREAT PATTERN of LOVE, not
only to relieve the miserable, to visit
I 2 the

the Poor and Fatherless in their Distress, and by all possible Means to promote the Happiness of your own Species; but to extend your Charity to your most inveterate Enemies; to forgive *them*, from whom you have received the greatest Injuries [and Provocations,——even as God, through the Merits of Christ, hath promised to forgive *You*.——But I recommend all these interesting Particulars to be severally enlarged on in your *private Meditations*:——And conclude with humbly begging of God to incline us faithfully to commemorate the Death of his Son in receiving the *Holy Sacrament*: May the blessed Spirit adorn our Souls with such good Dispositions, as may render them worthy to be entertained at His Table who redeemed them! May we never omit any Opportunity of fulfilling this last Will of our dying Lord! May we experience it
to

to be a strengthening as well as pious Ordinance! And may it be followed by a perpetual Succession of good Works,—an endless Train of those Virtues, which He himself both practised and enjoined!

To whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, Glory, and Praise; Love, Service, and Obedience, both now and for evermore. Amen.

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S E R M O N V.
O N T H E
R E S U R R E C T I O N.

1 C O R. X V. 20.

*Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become
the First-Fruits of them that slept.*



S E R M O N V.
On the RESURRECTION.

1 C O R. XV. 20.

NOW IS CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD,
AND BECOME THE FIRST-FRUITS OF
THEM THAT SLEPT.

HOW greatly, my Brethren, does the Solemnity of the present Festival differ from the Occasion on which we were last assembled in this holy Place! We then related the Tragedy of a murdered Saviour; suffering a painful, protracted, ignominious Death, for the Redemption of a guilty World. How happily is the Scene now changed! changed from Horror, Lamentation, and
Woe,

Woe, to Security, Joy, and Gladness:
 For "the Lamb that was slain, now liveth
 "again," and is risen to die no more.
 That * "*same Stone which the Builders*
 "once rejected, is now become the Head-
 "Stone in the Corner. *This is the Lord's*
 "Doing : and it is marvellous in our Eyes.
 "This is the Day which the Lord hath
 "made : we will rejoice and be glad in it."
 We will rejoice and be glad in this our
Christian Jubilee, because our greatest and
 most formidable Enemy, Death, is con-
 quered.—† "*O Death, where is now thy*
 "*Sting? O Grave, where is now thy Vic-*
 "*tory? The Sting of Death is Sin ; and*
 "*the Strength of Sin is the Law. But*
 "*Thanks be to God, which giveth us the*
 "*Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ;*"
 through him who is not only himself risen
 from the dead, but is also become the *First-*
Fruits of them that slept !

In

* Psa. cxviii. 22, 23, 24.

† 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57.

In the following Discourse I intend to take into Consideration those two great Arguments to which the Text immediately refers us: viz.

1st. The Certainty of the Resurrection of our blessed Lord from the dead. And

2dly. The Certainty of our own Resurrection, as connected with that of Christ, and of which *His* is an incontestible Proof. 130

These two general Heads being treated on, I shall request your particular Attention to such an Address, as the real Importance of this Subject demands and suggests.

1st. Allow me to confirm your Faith by such Arguments, as prove the Certainty of the Resurrection of our blessed Lord from the dead.

This

This is that Part in the great IMMANUEL's Character, which ratifies, and gives a Lustre to, every other. This is a fresh and undeniable Evidence that the Man Christ Jesus was in Reality what he pretended to be,—even the Lord of Heaven, as well as Saviour of the Earth; the Son of the eternal Father, as well as “*the Propitiation for our Sins.*” It is also a very substantial Article of our Faith, on which rest several others of the highest Importance. For the Resurrection of a Redeemer was a necessary Prelude to his Ascension into Heaven,—to the Descent of that COMFORTER, whom he had promised to send to his Disciples,—to his Mediatorial Office at the right Hand of God,—and to his Returning at the great Day of Trial to judge both the quick and dead. These are leading Christian Tenets jointly connected, and must inseparably stand or fall. The latter must be
their

their Fate if we admit not the Resurrection of Christ from the Grave.——But Inspiration itself has given us undoubted Testimony of this Truth, which was so necessary to be revealed, and the Belief of which is so essential to our Happiness. The sacred Historians have left such Circumstances of its Reality upon Record, as no subtle Invention can evade, no specious Arguments controul, nothing but mere senseless Obstinacy resist. We gather certain Intelligence from these authentic Writers of the precise Time when our Lord burst the Prison of the Grave, and sprung victorious from the dead. They tell us that the Earth was then convulsed, and the Guards, like the Earth itself, trembled at Sight of the Angel, who rolled away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre, whose Countenance shone like the Lightening, and whose Raiment was white as Snow.

And

And they declare also that two of his Disciples, at the first Arrival of this joyful News, hastened to the Sepulchre, found the Linen in which they had wrapped him, saw, and believed.

But to obviate all Manner of Doubt or Scruple with Regard to so capital a Point in the Christian Religion, and to leave the contemplative *Sceptic*, as well as the rigid *Jew*, or *Deist*, without Excuse, the Redeemer of Mankind was pleased to appear in his usual Form upon Earth, after his Resurrection, to considerable Numbers; particularly to Mary Magdalene, his Disciples, and the five hundred Brethren at once. To his Apostles also he gave clear Evidence of his having re-assumed the same Body that descended into the Grave: * “ *Behold,* says he, *my*
“ *Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself.*
“ *Handle*

* Luke xxiv. 39.

“ *Handle me, and see: for a Spirit hath
“ not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have.*”

And immediately after, for a still further Proof of this momentous Article, he condescended to supply human Nature by its ordinary Method of Sustenance, and to eat visibly before them.

And yet after all this, one of their Associates, who happened at that Crisis to be absent, remained inflexible to whatever had been advanced in Order to obtain his Belief: and declared that he would not depend upon Report, † “ *except he saw
“ the Print of the Nails in his Hands, and
“ put his Finger into the Print of the Nails,
“ and thrust his Hand into his wounded
“ side.*”—Jesus, whose Pleasure it was to confirm the Doubtful, as well as confute the Gainsayer, seeing Thomas eight Days after with his Disciples, made him this
gracious

† John. xx. 25.

gracious Offer, * “ *Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side: and be not faithless, but believing.*”

The late incredulous Apostle, not less disconcerted perhaps upon the Reflexion of his own Inflexibility, than subdued by the unexpected Condescension of his Divine Master, was undoubtedly struck with a Sensation he had never felt before: He more emphatically discovered his own Perplexity, Joy, and Admiration in one Breath, than it would have been possible, in any other Words, for the most powerful Rhetorick to express;—He † “ *answered and said unto Him, MY LORD AND MY GOD.*”

Thus does the Resurrection of Christ appear to be a Matter of Fact, established upon the strongest Evidence. And thus
is

* John xx. 27.

† John xx. 28.

is verified that Prophecy of the Psalmist, according to the Interpretation of St. Peter; * “ *Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see Corruption.*” The Captain of our Salvation hereby proclaims to all his faithful Soldiers the compleat Victory he hath gained over their common Foe.— When our spiritual Prince unbarred the Gates of the Grave, and shook off the Fetters of Mortality, He then rose crowned with more noble and lasting Trophies than all the triumphant Powers militant on Earth, united, before or since, could ever boast of. Then was the contemptuous Cross converted into a glorious Banner, and the highest Dignity resulted from that once ignominious Tree. Then was all that Malice, so keenly levelled at the Destruction of our blessed Saviour, utterly defeated; and out of

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the

130 *On the Resurrection.* [Ser.V.
the dreary and disgraceful Womb of
Death were produced Joy, and Honor,
and everlasting Life.

Here a very weighty Circumstance of-
fers itself to our most serious Attention :
and which I proposed

2dly, To consider :—viz.—That the
Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ, is an infallible Proof of the
Resurrection of the whole human Race
consequent thereupon.

This is an Argument to which almost
every Page of the New Testament di-
rectly refers. In particular, the cele-
brated Author of the Text frequently
declares the natural Connection that sub-
sists betwixt Christ's Resurrection and
ours. * "*For if the Dead rise not,*" says he,
" then

* 1 Cor. xv. 16, 17.—, 20, 21, 22.

“ then is not Christ raised. And if Christ
 “ be not raised, your Faith is vain; ye are
 “ yet in your Sins. But now is Christ risen
 “ from the Dead, and become the First-
 “ Fruits of them that slept. For since by
 “ Man came Death, by Man came also the
 “ Resurrection of the Dead. For as in
 “ Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all
 “ be made alive.” And in another Place
 (introducing the same Argument) this
 animated Writer speaks explicitly and
 with Confidence; † “ If we believe that
 “ Jesus died and rose again, even so them
 “ also which sleep in Jesus will God bring
 “ with him.” Another Apostle likewise
 blesses God, who ‡ “ according to his
 “ abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again
 “ unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection
 “ of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an In-
 “ heritance incorruptible and undefiled, and
 “ that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven

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“ for

† 1 Thess. iv. 14. ‡ 1 Pet i 3, 4.

“*for us.*” Nay, Christ himself, in his Consolation to Martha, thus pronounces,
 || “*I am the Resurrection and the Life:*
 “*He that believeth in Me, tho’ he were dead,*
 “*yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth*
 “*and believeth in Me, shall never die.*”—
 Most comfortable, and yet astonishing Assertion! That ever the Particles of a corruptible Mass, dispersed into a thousand different Parts of the Earth, Sea, or Air, which have perhaps sometime or other conduced to the Nourishment of Animals of a different Species, or even been incorporated, in some casual State of their Revolution, into another human Being,—that ever those scattered Particles should be re-collected, and fashioned into a Form superior in Comeliness and Beauty to that which they constituted before,—even *like unto Christ’s most glorious Body*,—is a stupendous, incomprehensible

comprehensible Truth. And further: that this Body should be re-united to the Soul, its old and beloved Companion, and both rendered capable of enjoying an Immortality of Happiness, is a Certainty equally amazing and inconceivable. But the Voice of unerring Wisdom hath affirmed it: We may therefore exult in the Assurance; for we cannot be misled. And indeed, tho' we are unable to comprehend the Manner how this wonderful Union can be effected, as being a Problem beyond the Reach of our limited, finite Reason, yet that same Reason informs us, that it must be as easy for that omnipotent Artificer to re-animate a Body, the Materials of which are supposed to be dissipated thro' all the Elements, as it could be at first to create it out of *Nothing*, and instantaneously "breathe into it the Breath of Life."

But say, shall *all* those Myriads of mortal Beings, like Ourselves, that have peopled different Worlds, in a Multiplicity of Generations, shake off their leaden Slumber, and after Death rise again to Life?—rise to die no more?—rise to a State of endless Pleasure, or of endless Pain?—Yes; * “ *all that are in the Grave*
shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth;
they that have done Good unto the Resur-
rection of Life; and they that have done
Evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation.”
 The faithful Children of God, and the true Believers in Jesus Christ, they who have lamented under the Burthen of their Sins, and repented of their Iniquities, who have conquered their Lusts, and lived in cheerful Subjection to the Commands of their heavenly Father, are all “ *Prisoners of*
Hope:” They shall break the Bonds of their Mortality, in which they have been long holden, and, at the vivifying Sound
 of

* John v. 28, 29.

of the Archangel's Trump, start into new and lasting Extasies of Joy. The LORD JESUS, who will then descend a second Time from his coelestial Throne, amidst ten thousand Times ten thousand Voices of Saints and Angels, will remember their Fidelity to Him when they were upon Earth, and reward them in Heaven with a Crown of everlasting Life.——

His tremendous Majesty, and irresistible Power, which will scatter Trembling, Horror, and Amazement thro' the guilty Part of the Universe, will only conduce to animate the Hopes, ennoble the Affections, and even augment the Joys of his own People. Upon *Them* the bright Beams of his majestic Countenance will seem to shine with more resplendent Glory. — Never hath human *Eye seen, nor Ear heard*, nor is it possible even for the Mind to conceive what glorious Rewards that adorable Person will then confer

X
upon them, that love him.——Will it be deemed presumptuous to indulge Imagination, and in some Degree to anticipate their Happiness, if we suppose Him to testify his Approbation by receiving them in such Language as this?

“ Come, ye dutiful and affectionate Children of my Father, and take Possession of your promised Inheritance! Gladly do I introduce You into these happy Mansions. Ye are my faithful People, that have done me true and laudable Service: that, for my Sake, have mortified your own Lusts, resisted Numbers of pressing Temptations, and renounced many a darling Sin. I now find no Blemish in You. Ye are immaculate Penitents, cleansed in the Blood of your Redeemer.——Ye are they who have stood the severe Trials of Contempt, Indignities, Persecution, for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake.——Ye
X
“ are

" are they, who have submitted to the
 " cruel Treatment of *Scourging, Impri-*
 " *sonment, and Death* itself, in the same
 " Cause.—Ye are they, who have once
 " been tortured under a Variety of pain-
 " ful and lingering *Diseases*, and yet
 " never quitted your firm Hold, your
 " steady Confidence in Me; never vainly
 " murmured at the wise Dispensations
 " of your God, *nor charged Him foolishly.*
 " —Ye are they, that have worn out your
 " wretched Lives in the dreary Cells of
 " *Poverty*, and been exposed to all its
 " kindred Ills; such as Hunger and Toil,
 " Cold and Nakedness, Infamy and
 " Scorn; and yet, far from repining at
 " your Fate, or arraigning your Maker's
 " Government, You have ever humbly
 " acquiesced in His unerring Disposals,
 " and with the genuine Spirit of dis-
 " tressed Piety, adored his inflicting
 " Hand; How often have I listened to
 " your

“ your sincere Prayers, and holy Reso-
“ lutions, ye Sons of Pain and Grief!
“ How have I always, in the greatest
“ Temptations, supported You by my
“ Grace, and been well pleased with the
“ Heart-directed Offerings of your Lips!
“ And tho’ it was I who shot every Ar-
“ row that pierced You, yet all this, You
“ see, was but intended *then* to refine
“ You of your Dross, and to present
“ You *now* as fit Inhabitants for these
“ blessed Abodes.—Finally, Ye are they
“ that have shone in a *happier* and more
“ *exalted* Sphere; with whom have been
“ intrusted Talents of a *superior* Worth:
“ Ye have been richly endowed with
“ every earthly Comfort, and have been
“ also rich in Works of Piety and Bene-
“ ficence; Ye have taken Care not to be
“ deluded by the *lying Vanities* of Life;
“ not to waste your precious Substance
“ in Ostentation, Luxury, and Riot; but
“ have

“ have converted it to nobler and more
 “ useful Purposes : It has been your con-
 “ stant Pleasure to reach out the liberal
 “ Hand to those *Little Ones*, whom I so
 “ warmly recommended to your Cha-
 “ rity: You have often healed the Sores
 “ of *my Lazarus*, nourished him with
 “ your Food, “ and his Loins have
 “ blessed You:” “ You have often dried
 “ up the disconsolate Widow’s Tears,
 “ and taught the Heart of the Fatherless
 “ to forget its throbbing:—Come then,
 “ ye faithful Stewards in your Master’s
 “ Service, and enjoy the *Treasure* You
 “ have *here laid up!*—And come also,
 “ ye that have been *weary and heavy*
 “ *laden*, and here *rest from your Labors!*
 “ Come, all ye Servants of Holiness, ye
 “ blessed of your Lord, and enter into
 “ my Joy! Come, receive the Kingdom,
 “ that can never be shaken; possess the
 “ Crown,

"Crown, that can never fade; enjoy
"the Glory, that can never decay."

X In such a Manner may we humbly conceive, according to our faint Ideas, that the *Righteous* will be welcomed into everlasting Habitations.—While the obdurate *Wicked*—My Mind shrinks at the very Apprehension of *Their* miserable State—while *They* alas! who have been confined in the dark Dungeon of the Grave, like some notorious Malefactors against the Day of Assize, must be summoned reluctant to the dreadful Tribunal. How will they then in vain exclaim against the false Pleasures of a perishing Life! How, in all the Bitterness of their Souls, curse its dear-bought Sweets! How condemn their own egregious Folly in vilifying the Mercies of their injured Maker, in abusing that precious Atonement, which alone could
save

save them, and in madly rejecting the Offers of Supporting Grace! Struck with the dire Sound of that tremendous Sentence, “*Go, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire,*” how will they stare in all the Wildness of Terror and Confusion!—consigned to perpetual Torments,—stigmatized with indelible Infamy before Millions of Saints and Angels,—seized with an awful, motionless Gloom of Guilt,—oppressed with a silent Horror without a Name.

That I may excite your Diligence in striving to secure a Portion in the *former*, and to escape the Miseries of the *latter* of those two opposite States, I now beg that You will particularly attend to an affectionate and sincere Exhortation, such as the great Importance of the Subject requires and suggests.

If

If the Son of God for your Sakes, my Brethren, in the first Place, came down from Heaven, and condescended to be born of a pure Virgin; if He then propagated and established wholesome Precepts and Instructions, which he himself, in your own Nature, was pleased to exemplify; if, after that his Life was sacrificed for your Sins, and is now restored for your Justification; if you, and every human Creature that has ever trod the Earth, from the very Commencement of Time, when God said, *Let us make Man*, to the final Dissolution of all Things, must be convened before an heavenly Judiciary; and if you must *There* receive, according to your Temper and Conduct *Here*, an everlasting Decision to Bliss or Woe;——if all this be true; which it certainly is, as I have clearly and undeniably proved,——then, for Christ's Sake, consider in Time how much it concerns
you

you to *live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present World.*—Think seriously and oft on the great Day of RESURRECTION.—“*In the Evening, and Morning, and at Noon-Day*” anticipate the Time, when “*this Corruptible must put on Incor-*
“*ruption, and this Mortal must put on Im-*
“*mortality.*”—Depend upon it, it is the best Employment of your Thoughts.—Consider impartially what Kind of an Appearance you are then likely to make in that vast Concourse of Spiritual Beings, and how you are prepared for that awful Catastrophe.—The God of Mercy so loved you, “*that he gave his only begotten*
“*Son that you might not perish, but have*
“*everlasting Life;*”—O do not frustrate this his gracious Intention, and divorce your own Happiness for ever. Your Saviour was sent a voluntary Ambassador of Peace (being also himself the Mediator of it) betwixt your offended God and
you;

you;—Do not ye yourselves break the Conditions of that Peace, by the deliberate Practice of one single Vice. Your Lord has once bled for your Redemption;—Do not make his Wounds bleed afresh, and by your repeated Crimes, and continued Provocations, *put him to an open Shame.* He is indeed *the Propitiation for your Sins*;—a Truth, which should be rivetted to your Hearts!—But be assured that incorrigible Sinners shall have no Share in that pure Atonement. The *Redemption*, which is completed in the *Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection* of CHRIST, is a Doctrine of unspeakable Consolation to every true Penitent: But if you suppose it is intended to open a Way to Indolence or Licentiousness, or esteem it as a Plea for the Wicked to prosecute their Vices, you will find yourselves egregiously mistaken. On the contrary, it is the most persuasive Motive
that

that can be urged to an unfeigned and sincere Repentance, to an hearty Indignation against all Manner of Sin, and to an obedient and reverential Love of your best Friend and Patron.—He has proclaimed his Will in that amiable Copy of it, the Gospel. Attend duly to that sacred Chart, and you cannot be deceived in what you are to believe, pursue, and avoid, in order to obtain your Salvation. Never forget that Jesus Christ your Redeemer, was *born* for your Sakes; that he *suffered* for your Sins; was * “*put* “*to Death in the Flesh, and* (as on This “*Day*) *quickened by the Spirit:*” But at the same Time remember, that none but PRACTICAL BELIEVERS shall reap the Benefit of Redeeming Mercy.—Lastly, and especially, intreat the good Giver of all Blessings for the constant Communications of that same powerful

L SPIRIT,

* 1 Pet. iii 18.

SPIRIT, which raised up Jesus from the Dead. Without HIS Aid You will fail in the Execution of your best Resolutions, and your most vigorous Efforts will prove vain and abortive.—Pray then incessantly for this infallible Guide to sustain and conduct you thro' all the devious Paths of Life; that, whether you find them smooth or rugged,—scattered with Roses, or beset with Thorns,—you may still tread safe,—still be enabled to walk like such Persons as prove that they have a grateful, and an Heart-felt Sense of their being the *Redeemed of the Lord.*

To whom be ascribed all Honor, Glory, and Praise, &c. Amen.

S E R

S E R M O N VI.

The true Christian Faith described,

1 COR. xiii. 13.

*And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these
three; but the greatest of these is Charity.*

✓

STATION VI

STATION VII

The two Churches described.



And now observe I shall begin Church No. 1.

First, that the principal part of the church is

the nave, which is a square of 40 feet by 40 feet.

The chancel is a square of 20 feet by 20 feet.

The tower is a square of 10 feet by 10 feet.

The spire is a square of 10 feet by 10 feet.

The steeple is a square of 10 feet by 10 feet.

The pulpit is a square of 10 feet by 10 feet.

The altar is a square of 10 feet by 10 feet.

The font is a square of 10 feet by 10 feet.

The organ is a square of 10 feet by 10 feet.

The vestry is a square of 10 feet by 10 feet.

S E R M O N VI.

The True Christian Faith described.

1 C O R. xiii. 13.

AND NOW ABIDETH FAITH, HOPE;
CHARITY, THESE THREE; BUT THE
GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.

WE have here a concise, but comprehensive Account, wherein the true Spirit of Christianity doth consist. The Religion which the ever blessed and adorable Son of God came to propagate, is designed to have a practical Influence on the Minds of its Votaries. And wherever it is cordially received, that Influence cannot fail to discover itself. To this most necessary Point the Apostle calls the Attention of

his Corinthians. They had been unhappily divided by a Spirit of Contention and Disputation; and their Divisions led the Way to the grossest Vices and Immoralities. Having therefore enumerated a Variety of spiritual Gifts, which were bestowed on the faithful, and having exhorted them to put in their Claim for a Share in these truly desirable Endowments, he endeavours to guard them from perverting their Talents to unworthy Purposes, by "*shewing them a still more excellent Way.*" This excellent Way he spends the whole Thirteenth Chapter in describing. And what serious,—may I not add, what ingenuous Man can read this Chapter, without feeling a generous,—a divine Glow of Heart, at the beautiful Description he meets with of Christian-Love? Here it is declared, that vain are all the Ornaments of Nature,
or

13th Cor^{2d}

or of Grace, if they are planted in a Soil that makes not suitable Returns for so rich a Cultivation. Practical Religion it is, exemplified in a constant and conscientious Discharge of every relative and social Duty, that must prove the Genuineness of our Faith, and the Sincerity of our Profession. Where this laudable Principle of Love is wanting, —Love to God, and, for his Sake, Love to Man, all our Profession is no better than “ *sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.*”

He then who would raise the noble Edifice of true Religion, should take especial Care to accommodate himself with such Materials, as may constitute a solid and unperishable Foundation; “ *lest haply after he hath begun to build, he be not able to finish.*”

Thousands there are, with Minds yet untainted by any flagrant Enormities, who set out chearfully, and make some strenuous Efforts towards a Progress, in the divine Life; and yet, through the Depravity of their Hearts, and that Propensity to Evil, which is interwoven with human Nature, tire in the Race. The Reason of this is clear. Christianity is a constant Warfare. It is a doubtful Engagement with a numerous Train of Foes: The most potent of which are these that lie intrenched within our own Bosoms. The World indeed is a smiling Sycophant, which practises upon the Weakness of Humanity. It allures, like the Syren, with its enchanting Sounds, and betrays by its insinuating Arts. But the importunate Passions of our Nature, these innate Lusts, and clamorous Appetites, are the most prevailing Incentives to Vice. These are the perfidious "*Ene-*
mies

“*mies of our own Household,*” and which threaten us most with a total Overthrow. Voluptuousness may scatter her Roses, and Luxury shed her delicious Odours; Iron-hearted Malice may sting, or smooth Diffimulation spread her Snares; Temptation may point every Dart;—Yet we shall surmount the united Force of all these, if we can once learn to subdue the Corruption of our own Hearts. Hence flow *the Issues of Life, or Death.*—Where then shall we furnish ourselves with Arms; from what Quarter summon our Forces, in order to obtain such a glorious and compleat Victory? For it is an indisputable Truth, that of ourselves we are unequal to the Task. If we criticise impartially on the Merit of our own Strength, we cannot but acknowledge that we stand in Need of a superior Aid, and sounder Principles, whereon to fix a firm and lasting Rule for the Conduct of
our

our Lives.—Now this Aid, these Principles, and this Rule, are graciously tendered to our Acceptance in the Gospel of Christ. Here is a rich and invaluable Magazine, furnished with the most precious Store. In this sacred Repository are contained the unsearchable Riches of the Mercy and Love of God; the transcendently gracious Privilege of the Redemption by Jesus Christ; and a most comfortable Assurance of the sanctifying Operations of the ever blessed Spirit.

A lively Faith in these sublime and distinguished Truths, a well grounded Hope, and an unfeigned Charity, will sooth every turbulent Passion of our Souls, and support us under the most difficult Trials of Life.—A Definition of these three great Christian Graces, I beg Leave to recommend to your earnest Attention.—I shall enlarge upon each of them

them as they are placed in their Order, and are apparently deducible from the Words of the Text; “ *Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.*”

I. There is not perhaps a Subject with, in the whole Circle of Divinity, that has suffered more by the destructive Heats of Controversy, or been more perplexed by erroneous and obscure Meanings, than this of Faith.—May that unerringly wise, and most gracious Being, who directs every good Intention, and who alone can crown it with Success, enable me to define this Virtue in such a Manner, as corresponds with the genuine Import of his own Language, and as may be conducive to your immortal Interests! If I prove so happy as to gain this Point, my Intention will be compleatly answered, and my

my Labor recompensed in the highest Sense.

The Word *Faith*, I humbly conceive, admits of various particular and limited Explications in different Parts of Scripture. Sometimes it is appropriated to the Power of * working Miracles: At other Times it denotes † Affiduity, Faithfulness or Veracity: Again, it implies ‡ a bare Assent of the Understanding to the Truths recorded in the Evangelical History; unattended with a suitable Conduct in Heart and Life.—I mention this Diversity of its Significations, for the Sake of Distinction only, and to guard you against any mistaken Notions, in Relation to a prime Article of that Religion, which you publicly, and, I hope I may add, (from your constant and regular Attendance in this Place) heartily profess.

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* Mat. xvii. 20. † Mat. xxiii. 23. ‡ James 2d Ch. passim.

—It is not my Design to expatiate on any of the Interpretations above-mentioned; nor to perplex your Memories with a Quotation of all those several Passages, where the Sense of the Word under Consideration is manifestly varied by the sacred Penman: as, I think, so nice and critical an Inspection could have no direct Tendency either to the Improvement of your Morals, or the Edification of your Souls. But I will endeavor to explain to you the Nature of this leading Principle, in its most useful, weighty, and extensive Meaning.

Through this single Channel runs an agreeable Variety of Streams, which terminate in a fixed Point. A most pleasing View that claims all our Attention! In the Object of Faith is comprehended both an History, and a Revelation. In the former we have one regular, though
diversified

diversified Chain of Accounts, which leads us through certain intricate and blind Paths, till we arrive at a fair and unbounded Prospect; I mean the continued Process of Redemption from God's * first disclosing that gracious Design, till its full and perfect Completion in Jesus Christ: from the latter we derive an Idea (faint as it is) of whatever belongs to an eternal State of Existence; both of the surpassing Joys of Heaven, the secure Inheritance of every good and faithful Servant, and of the agonizing Miseries of Hell, the inevitable Portion of unrepenting Sinners.—When in the Retrospect, the Eye of Faith beholds the Sufferings of an expiring Lord, the Heart swells with Adoration, Gratitude and Love; when it anticipates the Prospect, and surveys the blissful Regions of Futurity, it then pants with Hope,

* Gen. iii. 15.

Hope, and is eager to qualify itself for a Possession of that Land, which will richly repay all its Labors. Thus in one Light, as it looks forward into Eternity, it is "*the Substance of Things hoped for*;" in another, as it looks back on past Mercies, it is "*the Evidence of Things not seen*."

We have an Instance of Faith's making its early Appearance in the World, in † "*Abel's offering unto God a more excellent Sacrifice than Cain*." The stupendous Work of Creation was perhaps at that Time the only Basis it could find to rest upon; and therefore, though a noble, yet a much inferior Support to that, which is now clearly presented to us. But as the World grew and multiplied, the Mercies of a beneficent God multiplied upon it. That narrow Horizon, which

† Heb. xi. 4.

which at first so much confined this delightful View, as we tread farther in the Paths of the sacred History, becomes more extensive. The distinguished Patriarch, the Father of the Faithful (tho' at that distant Period he could have but a dim and imperfect Sight) || rejoiced to see the Day spring from on high. Under the Mosaic Dispensation, which was promulged by God's own Authority, and enforced by the Sanction of Rewards and Punishments, the Night grew still less dark. And doubtless the succeeding Generations had each of them stronger and more enlivening Conceptions of the glorious "*Sun of Righteousness*," the nearer they advanced towards the Dawn of the revealing Day. And when this broke out, every fleeting Cloud dispersed, and every other languid Light became quite extinct; anxious Doubt was absorbed in full

full Assurance, and the Mists of Error vanished like the Morning-Dew. Then was there one continued Day-Light; one clear Meridian-Blaze. From thence Life and Immortality sprung to Light. Then did the poor untutored Gentiles, as well as God's peculiar People Israel, feel the Heaven-directed Influence. Mere Rites and Ceremonies were then abolished, and a rational and divine Law was introduced in their Room.

Now, a strong and settled Conviction of the Reality of all this; namely, that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is that "*Sun of Righteousness*," that grand Luminary, that sheds his peerless Lustre on our once benighted Land; that he mercifully condescended to divest himself of all his Glory; descended from the heavenly Mansions; assumed our mortal Nature; lived, preached, and died for our

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Sakes;

Sakes; that he sits now enthroned at the right Hand of the Majesty on high; and will at the last great Day of Accounts, assign to all his faithful and obedient Servants an everlasting Portion of consummate Bliss; and denounce an endless and irrevocable Doom of Misery upon the impenitent Wicked; and lastly, That the concurrent Assistance of the divine Spirit is indispensably necessary, and therefore ought humbly to be implored, in the great Work of Reconciliation;—to have a full Conviction, I say, of all this deeply impressed upon the Mind, is to have a **TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH.**

Such, and such only, is that Faith which justifies: and for this evident Reason; because such a Faith alone can direct its sincere Professors in the Paths of Righteousness and true Holiness. It is the Forerunner of Hope, Charity, and every

every other amiable Virtue. It is such a Faith as this, which claims the Patronage of the highest Honor in the Christian System; and that is——the Honor of MAKING US GOOD. Even the inestimable Benefit of our Redemption by Christ, and of our Sanctification by the Spirit, are both closely connected with this Design: For St Paul affirms that * “we are
“ *God’s Workmanship, created in Christ*
“ *Jesus unto good Works.*” And he also tells us that † “the Fruit of the Spirit is
“ *Love, Joy, Peace, long-Suffering, Gentle-*
“ *ness, Goodness.*” Indeed the whole Tenor of Scripture aims at this single Point. Which is not difficult to be accounted for, when we consider that, though Faith is the prime Motive, practical Piety is the only unexceptionable Proof of true Religion, and extends through every Part of the Christian Character. If we

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* Ephes. ii. 10,

† Gal. v. 22;

rob Faith of this Jewel, we take away all its Worth, and shall justly be condemned for so presumptuous an Offence. † *“For without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.”*

But when we behold Faith shining under the Influence of God's Holy Spirit, and regard it as being productive of generous and Praise-worthy Actions; as a true Guide to every divine and social Duty; in this Sense we deservedly style it the Guardian of the Christian Name. When we view it in this Light, we cannot forbear crying out—Thou lovely, thou divine Principle!—Thou strong and insurmountable Barrier of all Virtue, and of all Happiness! Thou Spring of every real Pleasure; and thou Soother of all the Pains of Life! By thy Power it is that we are enabled to conquer every Difficulty;

to

† Heb. xii. 14.

to rest the pressing Temptations of this vain World; and to confine our most predominant Passions within the Limits of Reason and Religion. Soaring on thy Wings Imagination takes its Flight into that happy Climate, from whence no Traveller shall ever wish to return; and unhinging the Doors of this earthly Prison, bursts open into the transcendent Joys of Eternity.

I am afraid indeed (I wish the Fear was groundless) that there are some People, elated by warm Affections, and chimerical Ideas, who depend on Faith alone as a perfectly saving Grace; and whose Hopes of Salvation center in the imputed Righteousness of a Saviour, and a total Recumbency on his Merits, as being all-sufficient, without any Co-operation of their own:—Wild Notions these! which like an inveterate Fever in the

Body, instead of strengthening and invigorating, weaken and impair the noblest Faculties of the Soul; and, like that too, consume as they inflame.

Far different Lessons do we learn from the durable Monuments of Holy Writ. Men of unquestionable Wisdom bid us harbor more worthy Sentiments of a Religion so pure as ours.—In Objection then to this dangerous Extreme, let me observe that the Gospel abounds with numberless Exhortations to an uniform virtuous Course of Life. To this End it prescribes the best Rules, and stimulates by the most persuasive and encouraging Motives. All the Megrimms of Fanaticism, and the idle Dreams of Enthusiastic Folly fly before it. In this divine Book, are stamped the fairest and most perfectly intelligible Characters. Pity it is that they should ever be misrepresented.

That

That parabolical Method in which our Saviour frequently conveyed his Instructions; comparing Candidates for Heaven with “*Labourers in the Vineyard*,” and urging their Care and Diligence, as Persons with whom Talents were intrusted to be improved, clearly represents the Christian State in a continued Scene of Action. But not to descend into Particulars; it may well suffice to refer you at once to his admirable Sermon on the Mount. How full and expressive is this beautiful Epitome of the whole Duty of Man! If the pious and most excellent Rules contained herein are not worthy to be complied with; if it is not necessary to exert our Faculties in adhering to them as closely as we can; why were they so warmly recommended by the great and eternal Law-giver? Why so peremptorily enjoined as the Conditions of our Happiness? O why was there made such

Waste of all this precious Ointment? Surely we cannot suppose the Doctrines advanced by such a Teacher to be superfluous; or that any Precept could proceed, without a Meaning, from that unerring Mouth. Nor can it therefore correspond with either Reason or Scripture to expect Salvation upon the Strength of a bare Belief in this Divine Person (how strong soever may be our Pretensions of Love and Zeal for his Name) so long as we persist in an obstinate Violation of his sacred Laws. Such a delusive Expectation as this would be contrary to the ultimate Design of his Mission, and manifestly repugnant to the revealed Copy of his Will. I appeal to his own Declaration; * “ *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which* “ *is*

* Mat. vii. 21.

“ is in Heaven.” And he reminds us in a most solemn and awful Manner, that
† *“ the Hour is coming in the which all that
“ are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and
“ shall come forth; they that have done Good,
“ unto the Resurrection of Life; and they
“ that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection
“ of Damnation.”* No Language can be more explicit.

And you cannot, I think, want to be reminded that the Doctrine of the Apostles was in all Points consistent with that of their great Master. An absolute and perfect Harmony subsisted betwixt them. They give us true Notions of this probationary State under the significant Emblems of a Race, a Pilgrimage, and a Warfare. How strong do these Similitudes urge the Necessity of our own Endeavours; not only to curb our head-
strong

† St. John's Gospel, v. 28, 29.

strong Passions, and mortify our inordinate Lusts, resolutely abstaining from the fatal Indulgence of any single habitual Vice; but to advance forwards in a Course of Piety and Virtue; § “*pressing*
“*toward the Mark of the Prize of the high*
“*Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*” Nay there is scarce a Page in the New Testament, which does not either express or imply a Necessity of human Co-operation with divine Grace, in order to the Attainment of everlasting Happiness.

But it is fondly and pertinaciously insisted on by the *Antinomians*, that Salvation, in several Parts of Scripture, particularly in the Writings of Saint Paul, is attributed to Faith alone, exclusive of good Works.

’Tis with real and undissembled Pleasure that I acknowledge how fervent this
great

great Teacher was in vindicating the Honor, and magnifying the Glory of his dear Lord and Saviour; zealously contending for the Merits of that ample Satisfaction, that was made for all penitent Sinners and true Believers; and, as much as possible, stemming the Torrent of Infidelity, which was so very impetuous, and spread itself so wide. What he labors to prove, is, that, as * *“all
“ have sinned (both Jews and Gentiles) and
“ come short of the Glory of God,”* it is not possible that any one should be justified by the Works of the Law; but that our Offences must be obliterated by Virtue of that great Sacrifice alone, which was offered upon the Cross; and that it is by God's free Mercy in the spotless Purity of his beloved Son, that Sinners are restored into Favor, and accepted in his Sight; † *“for as by one Man's Disobedience
“ many*

* Rom. iii. 23. † Rom. v. 19.

“ many were made Sinners, so by the Obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Certain it is, that if the Law could have been kept without Violation, or had Man been in a Capacity of saving himself, Redemption would have been a superfluous Thing. But since Infirmities are involved in our Nature, and Reason itself is vitiated and depraved; since, in Consequence of Adam’s Transgression, we are alienated from God, and Imperfection attends our best Services; we must depend on that † “ Righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ;” we must infer § “ that a Man is justified by Faith without the Deeds of the Law.” Thus doth our Apostle confirm his first Position, that || “ the Gospel of Christ is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” And we cannot but acquiesce

† Rom. iii. 22.

§ Rom. iii. 28.

|| Rom. i. 16.

acquiesce in his invincible Method of Reasoning; and not only acquiesce, but pour out our Souls in rapturous Praises and Thanksgivings for that ever-memorable Propitiation that was made for the Sins of Man.

But now, whoever peruses the Writings of this eminent Preacher of the Gospel, with any Degree of Impartiality, cannot be ignorant how strongly he enforces the Obligation of Obedience upon every human Creature to the Will of the Creator. So far is he from allowing the least Encouragement to confide in a quiescent, fruitless Faith, that, like some wise Master-Builder, he makes it his Corner-Stone for this very Purpose; that he might raise upon it the most beautiful and magnificent Fabrick of Good Works. Directing himself to Titus, he thus admonishes him, * “ *In all Things*
“ *shewing*

* Titus ii. 7.

“*shewing thyself a Pattern of good Works.*”

And thus again, with great Fervency,

§ “*This is a faithful Saying, and these*

“*Things I will that thou affirm constantly,*

“*that they which have believed in God,*

“*might be careful to maintain good Works.*”

And after many useful and pious Exhor-

tations to the Hebrews, just before the

Conclusion of his Epistle, he breathes out

this ardent and pathetic Wish; † “*Now*

“*the God of Peace, that brought again*

“*from the Dead our Lord Jesus Christ,*

“*that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through*

“*the Blood of the everlasting Covenant,*

“*make you perfect in every good Work to do*

“*his Will; working in you that which is*

“*well-pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus*

“*Christ.*” The Time would fail me to

enumerate the Multiplicity of Passages

of a * similar Purport, which adorn the

Compositions of this excellent Author.

Only

§ Tit. iii. 8.

† Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

* See his Epistle to the Ephesians, *passim*.

Only further allow me to recommend to your Consideration some of the † concluding Chapters of his Epistles to the Romans. Never did the Pen of Man draw a more perfect Picture of pure Morality than is here described. Having justly vilified the Merits of mere human Nature, and declared the Invalidity of the Mosaic Law, he proceeds to prove, from irresistible Arguments, the Justification of Man by Faith in Christ; and then, to crown all, he lays before us (in the Chapters above-mentioned) certain Rules, by which we may infallibly judge whether we are possessed of this justifying Faith or not: If we are, we shall

* *“ present our Bodies a living Sacrifice,*
“ holy, acceptable unto God, which is our
“ reasonable Service. And we shall not be
“ conformed to this World; but be trans-
“ formed by the renewing of our Mind;
“ that

† Particularly Chap. xii. & xiii.

* Rom. xii. 1, 2.

“that we may prove what is that good and
“acceptable, and perfect Will of God.”—

Thus, in Conformity to the Doctrine of
another Apostle, † “by Works Faith is
“made perfect.” It is the good Tree,
which, flourishing under the benign In-
fluence of the blessed Spirit, and culti-
vated also by our own Industry, bears
good Fruit.—It is the Parent of all true
Obedience to the Commands of God.

The Result of the whole Argument is
reduced to this: If it be true that Jesus
Christ “came to call Sinners to Repen-
“tance;” if he “left us an Example that
“we might follow his Steps;” if, at the final
Audit of the World, § “we must all ap-
“pear before the Judgment Seat of Christ,
“that every one may receive the Things done
“in his Body, according to that he hath
“done, whether it be good or bad;” if it be
true

† St. Jam. ii. 22.

§ 2 Cor. v. 10.

true that the Arguments of Saint Paul are consistent one with another, and that he does not intend to overthrow in one Passage a Doctrine, which in several others it is his Business to establish; if he is in real Earnest when he says that
* “the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men; teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World;” and also that † “all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness: that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works;” and lastly, if it be true that other Writers, whowere inspired by the same God, advanced the same Doctrine;—then is it also incontestibly true that we can be

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saved

* Tit. ii. 11, 12.

† 2 Epistle to Tim. iii. 16, 17.

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saved only by a PRACTICAL FAITH; by that Faith, which (under the Direction and Assistance of God's Grace) "*worketh by Love,*" and produceth the genuine Fruits of sincere Repentance, and habitual Holiness.

This valuable Subject is of so copious and extensive a Nature, that to proceed upon it at present, I am doubtful, would tire your Attention. I intend therefore (with God's Permission) to address Myself to You in the remaining Part of it another Opportunity.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c. Amen.

S E R.

S E R M O N VII.

Hope and Charity described and
recommended.

1 COR. xiii. 13.

*And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these
three; but the greatest of these is Charity.*

IV DOMA

Hope and Charity delisted and recommended.



And now, dear friends, I have the honor to inform you that the great day of the year is at hand. It is the day of the year when the people of the world are called upon to show their loyalty to the cause of freedom and justice. It is the day when the people of the world are called upon to show their loyalty to the cause of freedom and justice. It is the day when the people of the world are called upon to show their loyalty to the cause of freedom and justice.

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II. Second Article under Consideration: which is Hope.

Hope is that rich and pleasant Cordial
that sweetens every Sorrow, which

S E R M O N VII.

Hope and Charity described and recommended.

1 C O R. xiii. 13.

AND NOW ABIDETH FAITH, HOPE,
CHARITY, THESE THREE; BUT THE
GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.

HAVING in a former Discourse from these Words treated on the Article of Faith, agreeable to its most useful Signification; and having clearly proved that it cannot possibly be in any other Sense instrumental to your Happiness in a future World, than as it leads you into a virtuous Course of Action, and is promotive of good Works; I now proceed to enquire into the Nature of the

II. SECOND Article under Consideration; which is HOPE.

Hope is that rich and pleasant Cordial, that sweetens every bitter Potion; which, under any oppressive Emergency, even when Necessity calls loudest for Relief, revives the drooping Heart. It is the Mind's best Soother, when laden with the heaviest Burthens. And when the Body wrestles with Pain, or labors under Disease, Hope is its most consolatory Physician, and seldom expires but with Life itself. And indeed this Span of Life is chequered with such a Variety of Miseries and Afflictions, that, if Hope was excluded, it would doubtless become an insupportable Load; it would, however, be still far more miserable, and that Span, short as it is, more contracted. But an all-wise, and unchangeable Providence, which orders all Things for the best,

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best, and the peculiar GOODNESS of which reflects an amiable Lustre on all the other Attributes of God, has implanted this Virtue in the Breast of Man, to render the Troubles of Life at least supportable, and to prompt him through all the different Scenes of it. Thus graciously has the Supreme Being dealt with Mankind in general. He seldom administers the distasteful Cup, but, as an alleviating Antidote, infuses into it some cordial Drops.

If we view this Topic in any other Point of Light, it will afford us the same agreeable Prospect.——The Landscape throughout the whole will be the same, but the Eye will be more or less delighted according to the several Parts that it surveys.——Hope, this universal Favorite, smiles on all Circumstances, and all Conditions; on the wretched as well

as happy : She supports the one, and animates the other. She reaches out her welcome Hand to the humble Cottager, as well as to the crowned Head. The illiterate Laborer, and the mean Mechanic, claim an equal Share of her Favors with the Learned and the Great. Thus, the Scholar treads the painful Labyrinths of Study, and with incessant Labor cultivates his Genius, from the Hope of gaining a more refined Taste in every useful and important Science.—

The aspiring Hero plans the military Line, and confronts the rough Edge of War, which he prefers to the insipid Sweetness of an indolent and obscure Life, because he hopes to purchase, by his singular Atchievements, a deathless Fame. Ask the Merchant why he traverses the Seas, “ *and occupies his Business in those great Waters?*” Why he combats the raging Hurricane, and exposes

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poses himself to the Fury of the merciless Waves? He will tell you he despises all Storms and Dangers from the Hope he entertains of advancing his Fortunes. Observe also the laborious Husbandman: How resolutely he bends under a perpetual Rotation of Care and Fatigue! See the glad Soil improve by the Nutriment it has borrowed from his industrious Hand! And while he scatters his Seed, behold him bedew it with his Sweat! Could he with equal Courage and Alacrity spin out so many toilsome Hours, was he not supported by this very probable Hope; that he shall see those Fields, which now appear so barren and naked, flourish again; re-adorned with their beautifully waving Vestments; and, at the Return of the Season, reward his Pains?

Whatever then our Enterprises are,
Hope

Hope is the engaging Motive. It may be styled the main Spring of Action. And though it is sometimes a flattering Idea, and exists barely in the Imagination, yet it is so nice and pleasing a Deception, that it anticipates Joys, which even in Foretaste exceed any that we really possess.

But if we confine our Reflections in particular to the GOOD CHRISTIAN'S Hope, we shall harbor Conceptions of a very different Kind. A Scene pregnant with the most interesting Discoveries will open to our View. Let us represent to ourselves a Man of this Character struggling under a Complication of the most pungent Calamities. Think how he is tossed in the turbulent Sea of Life! How many Vicissitudes of Clouds and Sunshine he encounters in the Voyage! That he has passed thro' all the Changes
of

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of capricious Fortune. In the florid Morning of his Days recollect how God crowned him with Honor! That he was then blessed with as many Comforts and Advantages, as large Possessions could administer, and this mortal State admit of.—And suppose him now in the most destitute and forlorn Condition;—stripped of all those Blessings, which Providence had so plentifully showered upon him. His Riches have taken Wings and fled. And Health, that precious Jewel, that brightened every other Enjoyment, he has now lost. Consider him also as forsaken by his Acquaintance, and despised by his once familiar Friends.—Those very Persons, who did eat of his Bread, and drank of his Cup, and who, it might reasonably be expected, should now endeavor to soothe his Sorrows, and mitigate his Pains, are become Reproachers of his Integrity, and instead of alleviating,

alleviating, insult his Woes.—O this Ingratitude! this marble-hearted Monster! —Say, is there any Foe human Nature has to engage with, equal to this?—Yes, Death, that relentless Archer, has shot a Dart sharper than even Ingratitude can point:—It has torn from him for ever his only Bosom-Friend—twisted closely to the Fibres of his Heart—as dear to him as that Heart itself—a faithful Partner, who shared in all his Sufferings, and heightened all his Joys—to whom he communicated every Secret of his Soul:—Ah! this is the deepest Wound he has received from the Almighty's permissive Hand;—He feels it in the tenderest Part—It pierces the Apple of his Eye.—In short, imagine him to sustain the blackest Combination of Evils that Flesh is Heir to.—Still God is his Hope and Strength; a very sure and constant Help in this amazing Variety of Trou-
bles.

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bles. He pretends not indeed (like the obdurate Stoic) to shake off the Feelings of Mortality, and pronounce actual Pain to be no Pain: But that steady and unalterable Trust, which he reposes in the tender Mercies of his God, and the Merits of his Christ (the most illustrious Sufferer that ever appeared in the World) softens all his Sorrows, and pours Balm into every Sore. And that Grace, which was sufficient to carry him triumphant through all the flattering Scenes of a gay and flourishing State, he now fully hopes will support him in the Time of extreme Distress. These Arrows that stick so fast in him he hopes God will either wholly extract, or abate their Pungency, or enable him to bear them with a proper Degree of Fortitude, and an entire Resignation to his divine Will. He considers them as levelled by the Hand of Heaven, for some wise and gracious Purpose

Purpose above the Reach of all human Foresight:—perhaps to prevent a certain fatal Emergency which was coming upon him unguarded; or otherwise to prove his Fidelity, give a fresh Lustre to his Virtue, and thereby intitle him to a brighter Jewel in the eternal Crown.—This is a Consideration worth all the rest. Here his Hope swells the highest. It inspires into his Bosom a secret inexpressible Comfort and Tranquilly, which all the Pleasures of the World cannot give, nor its Miseries united take away. Animated with this, he is so far from sinking into Despondency, or rashly exclaiming against Providence, that he blesses the mighty Arm that wounds him, and prays with humble Confidence that his

* “*light Affliction, which (comparatively speaking) is but for a Moment, may work for him a far more exceeding and eternal*”
 “*Weight*”

* 2Cor. iv. 17.

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“ *Weight of Glory.*” This is what inclines him to turn his Eyes and Affections from every gloomy Prospect of this Life, and to fix them on that serene Country, where Afflictions cannot follow him; where Deceit and Perfidy can find no Room; where no Cares perplex——no Pains torment;——but where he shall possess an uninterrupted Series of pure, substantial, inconceivable, immortal Joys.

Such is the Hope of the GOOD CHRISTIAN. It extends from Time into Eternity. And upon such Grounds it highly concerns every one of us to examine our Consciences: to ask them these material Questions; Whether they are so happy as to be endowed with this delightful Privilege? Whether this pleasing Hope and Expectation of the Divine Favor here, and endless Bliss hereafter, excites our Activity in the Christian Race? Whether

ther this is our strong Fence against every Storm? our sweet Consolation, and solid Support, under all Trials and Afflictions? And particularly, Whether we never flatter ourselves in a Matter of so great Importance?——Every Member, without Doubt, of the holy Catholic-Church, will express Hopes of Salvation after Death. But allow me to ask; On what Basis is your Hope grounded?——Perhaps you will answer; On the Mercies of God in Christ.——But have you Reason to hope that you are entitled to those Mercies? For the Promise of Salvation is not absolute, but conditional. Salvation will not be irresistibly imposed upon you, but is offered to your Choice on such Terms as are plainly set down in the written Word of God. Are you then conscious to yourselves that you pay a strict Attention to God's general Purpose in all his wise Dispensations? Do you heartily endea-

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vor to conform to his sacred **Laws**? Is it your principal Study to please your Master, your Saviour, your best Friend, who died for your Sakes? Do you repent sincerely of every past Transgression? And do you beg the Direction and Assistance of the good Spirit of God in every future Step you take? Unless you can honorably acquit yourselves upon such a Trial, you will find, to your unutterable Sorrow, that your Hope is built on a sandy Foundation. And when the Storm of God's Indignation arises, and beats upon it, it will vanish as a Dream; and many bitter Reflections, Heart-galling Remorse, and black Despair will succeed in its Room.

III. The last of those eminent Duties proposed to our present Meditations, is **CHARITY**.

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We

We have so fine and masterly a Description of this peculiarly Christian and God-like Virtue in the Chapter before us, that I need only recommend it to your serious Perusal. You will however observe in general that the Word Charity comprehends, in its most exalted and sublime Sense, a sincere Love of the Supreme God! and in Consequence thereof, an unlimited and universal Benevolence towards Man: And is therefore the distinguishing Criterion of all true Religion. It is like some grand and capacious Reservoir, from whence numberless refreshing Streams derive their Source. Tell me but of a charitable Man, and you comprize in that single Term ten thousand amiable Qualities. With what a graceful Humility does one of this Disposition conduct himself to all his Superiors! loving, honoring, and administering all possible Comfort to his

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Parents

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Parents above the rest of Mankind; and regarding them as placed in the highest and most immediate Authority over him, next to the common Parent of all the Earth: Such a one is utterly incapable of imbruing his Hands in the Blood of his Fellow-Creature: He cannot, like those Steele'd Hearts, unsusceptible of all the delicate Feelings of Humanity, plunder the Fatherless and Widow, build upon another Man's Ruin to advance his own Fortunes, or defraud any one of his Property to supply his Wants: He is no Author of any subtle Insinuations, no Propagator of any injurious Reports against his Neighbour's Character; abhorring so much the very Intention of undermining his Honor, or loading him with false Aspersions, that he rather chuses to conceal his Imperfections, and to draw a Veil over his Faults; never publishing these, but from such laudable

Motives as tend to the Glory of God, and the Reformation of Man: His Heart is the ever constant Dictator to his Tongue, and his Words are the real Transcript of his Heart. He envies not the Prosperity, nor covets the Possessions of another; but sits down calm and contented in that Station wherein Providence has fixed him; believing that God "*will never leave him, nor forsake him.*" He is too sensible of the Obligations of his Duty to Him to infringe deliberately upon any Part of that Law, which an unerring Penman has pronounced "*Charity fulfils.*"—Yet he does not stop at a Compliance with negative Duties only, but passes on to positive; to such as are more refined. Affability, Truth, and Honor are his inseparable Companions. These he carries along with him through every Stage of Life. In Relation to his Friends, his warm, steady, and disinterested;

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terested; to his Enemies, forgiving, benevolent, and hearty in Prayer for their Conversion. The poor and needy are sure in him to find the compassionate Christian. He esteems it his Privilege as well as Duty to relieve their Wants and lighten the Burthen of their Griefs. But his loftiest Aim is to promote the Edification of the Souls of Men. This is a Concern that fits closest to his Heart. Here divine and human Love unite their incomparable Charms. And when the gracious Aid of Omnipotence joins him, and gives Success to his spiritual Labors, what a cœlestial Ardor does he feel! (which indeed is only to be felt, but not described) What an Effusion of Bliss is poured upon his Head! With what Heartfelt Joy does he apply that beautiful Simile of the Prophet to himself! * “ *They*

“ *that be wise shall shine as the Brightness of*

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“ *the*

* Dan. xii. 3.

*" the Firmament, and they that turn many
" to Righteousness as the Stars for ever and
" ever."*—O ye Voluptuaries! who sap
the Foundation of your Health in Riot,
and drown your Honor in the luxurious
Bowl: can any of your inordinate Revels
bestow one Moment's Pleasure equal to
this? Tell me, ye sordid Misers! who
catch at empty Bubbles, and are regard-
less of substantial Joys; ye whose Af-
fections are so passionately fixed on the
perishing Things of this World, that ye
neglect to lay up Treasures that will
never decay; can all your golden Dreams
impart a Satisfaction to be compared
with that Man's, who, in the scriptural
Meaning, *" cast his Bread upon the Wa-
" ters;"* whose liberal Hand has snatched
some worthy Family from the Brink of
Ruin; who has been attentive to the
Cries of the helpless Orphan, challenging
his Pity, and *" made the Widow's Heart
" sing*

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“*sing for Joy?*” And, Oh ye fierce and implacable Monsters! you who are hurried down the rapid Stream of wild Repentment, and are loading your poor Brother with the whole Weight of your Ire; can that sweet Revenge of yours (falsely so called) afford you the least Portion of that true Comfort, Harmony, and Peace, which he enjoys, whose Breast glows with Gratitude, Meekness, and an unexceptionable brotherly Love?

I cannot dismiss this Part of my Subject without observing that Charity is called the greatest of those celestial Graces mentioned in the Text, because the two former will be only beneficial as they promote the latter; and because, in the future World, when Faith shall be swallowed up in Assurance, and Hope lost in Enjoyment, Charity alone will enter the heavenly Mansions, and there abide to all Eternity.

And now, my beloved Brethren! give me Leave, in the Conclusion, to exhort you to pursue with Ardor, a manly, rational, steady Course of Piety and intrinsic Goodness. Meditate seriously and often on the chief End and Design of your Creation. Consider the main Reasons why you were brought upon the Theatre of this World; what Part you are engaged to act; the Authority of that Power to whom you are engaged; and the Shortness as well as Uncertainty of the Time of Action. Consider that you are not to die for ever, but are Candidates for a Life that has no Period; that your final Appointment in another State will certainly be determined according to your Behaviour in this; that not all the boasted Confidence of Faith, nor the loftiest Flights of misguided Zeal can save you, if you lead wicked and impenitent Lives; that all your Thoughts, Words,

and

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and Actions lie open to the Omniscient God, and will be pronounced upon for Eternity.—O may the Severity of your Maker, on the one Hand, deter you from offending him, and his Goodness, on the other, excite your Obedience to his Commands!—Remember that if you kindle his Wrath, without appeasing it by a timely and sincere Repentance, you will be everlastingly ruined.——Think on that dreadful, irreverfible Sentence denounced againft all obdurate Sinners, “Go, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire!” And think alfo every Day, every Hour of your Lives, on the numberlefs unparalleled Instances you have of Divine Goodness and Compaffion. Think what wonderful, what endearing Methods your God has taken to engage a Return of your Affections, and to prevail on you to purfue your own Happinefs: How He formed you in the Womb; How He brought

brought you into Existence: How He guards and preserves you every Moment that you breathe: And how He is constantly pouring Blessings upon your Heads.—But, what is still more affecting, still infinitely more engaging than all this, and which is by far the strongest Testimony of his Love, think especially on the REDEMPTION of your Souls.—Behold, through the transparent Glass of Faith, the Lord of the Universe descending from above! See Him invested in your own Nature, and veil the Brightness of his Glory in a Body of Flesh! Hear that melting and pathetic Voice, which, in the midst of the most exquisite Tortures, utters nothing but Mercy and Pardon! View Him extended on the Cross, and that sanguine Stream issuing from his Side! He dies even for the Sake of his Enemies upon that infamous Tree: And he pours out his precious Blood in
pure

Ser. VII.] *described and recommended.* 203

pure Regard to those very People by whom that Blood was shed :—Be astonished, O Heavens ! and rejoice, O Earth ! Rejoice, tremble, and adore, ye Sons of Men ! This is the great Work of Reconciliation and Atonement ; this the stupendous Work, by which the most merciful God has been pleased to expiate your Sins ; and it is one Instance more of his boundless and unexampled Love, which crowns Millions of others.

Apply these Considerations to your Hearts, my Brethren, and surely they cannot fail of having a due Influence upon you. They cannot but awaken in you such a grateful Sense of the Love of God, and such an Aversion to the Odiousness of Sin, as will secure to you Peace of Mind here, and inconceivable Felicity hereafter. 'Tis true, your Nature is depraved, and many dangerous Bruises have

have been contracted by the Fall; the fatal Consequences of which are deplorably manifest: But do not yet despond: Redemption dignifies your Nature still: You are still the Sons of Immortality, and Heirs to an incorruptible Crown. And can you possibly miscarry, when blessed with such Privileges, and encouraged by such a Prospect? Can you persist in debasing that Nature, which the Son of God has so greatly, so miraculously honored? Can Beings of so high a Rank, can Lords of this lower World, for the Sake of a few fleeting sensual Pleasures, sink themselves into a State even below Brutality? Can they forget that superior Appointment assigned them above the Rest of the Creation, and the only valuable End for which they were both created and redeemed? Surely no! O do not be thus ungrateful to your great Creator and Redeemer,
and

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and thus perfidious to yourselves. Do not trespass too far upon the Mercy of God, infinite as it is; but remember that Justice is connected with it. They are both shining Attributes in the Divine Nature. And do not make the Wounds of his beloved Son bleed afresh, by the Commission of any actual, deliberate Sin. But repent sincerely of every past Transgression, and let that sacred Name, in which you profess to believe, be ever honored for the future in your Lives and Conversations.——Let the Love of Christ, of Virtue, and of yourselves, combine together.

Take especial Care also that you be not deceived in the weighty Matters of your Religion. She has fairly proclaimed her Will, and has strongly invited you to accept of her Instructions. Attend then without Prejudice to her attractive Voice.

Voice. Mistake not her own native Meaning. But avoid by all Means possible *Enthusiasm* on one Side, and *Self-Sufficiency* on the other. The former, instead of stamping the fair Impressions of a Gospel-Faith, will expose you to the Delusions of Fancy, or the boisterous Sallies of a disturbed Imagination; it will render you liable to mistake the Swellings of Pride and Conceit for the genuine Marks of celestial Hope, and the Vanity of Pomp and Ostentation for that true Charity, which does not play about the Head only, but reaches the inward Recesses of the Heart. The latter will make you regardless of the graceful Charms of Humility, and forgetful of your Dependence on that Providential Goodness, without which you must not expect to be happy either in this World, or the next.—Both these Extremes are equally dangerous to your future Welfare.

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fare. They are the two formidable Rocks, which Thousands have split upon Your safe Passage is to steer betwixt them: Be prevailed on to take that Faith for your Pilot, which was described in the former Part of this Subject, and you cannot go wrong. In vain will it be, without it, to expect ever to reach the Harbor of eternal Peace.—And above all Things address the Divine Majesty in humble, hearty, and incessant Prayers for the Direction and Assistance of his Holy Spirit; that you may be resigned under all the Sufferings, and enabled to subdue all the vicious Allurements, of this troublesome and sinful World; that you may be strengthened and encouraged in every good Thought, Word, and Work: That Faith, together with Hope and Charity, and that lovely Train of all the other concomitant Graces, which
adorn

208 . *Hope and Charity, &c.* [Ser. VII.]

adorn and dignify the Christian Profession, may join Hand in Hand.

May that same Spirit give you and me Grace to make such a practical Improvement upon this Advice, as that we may obtain (through the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ) in his own due Time, the glorious "*End of our Faith, even the Salvation of our immortal Souls!*"

Amen.

S E R.

S E R M O N V I I I .

S E L F - E X A M I N A T I O N stated and
enlarged on.

G A L . i v . 4 .

*Let every Man prove his own Work; and
then shall he have rejoicing in himself.*

218 MON
SERMON
SELF-EXAMINATION, AND



It is a common error to suppose that the
of the human mind is a mere collection
of facts and ideas, and that the
of the mind is a mere process of
arranging these facts and ideas in
a certain order. But the mind is
a more complex and active
organism than this. It is a
power which can create new
ideas and feelings, and which
can also modify and improve
those which it receives from
the outside world.

4 July 1736

S E R M O N VIII.

Self-Examination stated and enlarged on.

G A L. vi. 4.

LET EVERY MAN PROVE HIS OWN
WORK; AND THEN SHALL HE HAVE
REJOICING IN HIMSELF.

THE three grand Enemies to Man's
spiritual Interest, are the *World*, the
Flesh, and the *Devil*.

In Relation to the first; what a Variety of tempting Scenes are displayed to strike the Eye! What a Swarm of gay and fantastic Images dazzle the Idea! And what a Croud of vain Amusements, and still vainer Follies, captivate the Will! The *second* of these, viz. the *Flesh*,

is the Residence of those baneful Passions and Infirmities, which are the Source of all human Misery. From its very Origin it is corrupt and depraved, and in its own Nature prone to Sin and Death. The *third* is that insidious Adversary, who bribes us with false and precarious Pleasures, with a Design to defraud us of those which are true and permanent. A malicious Invader! And as artful as malicious: who watches all Opportunities, and adapts his subtle Insinuations to the several Constitutions, Humors, and Degrees of Men.

When we reflect on the fatal Consequences of being betrayed by any of the great Deceivers above-mentioned; and, in general, what Grief and Anxiety, what Ignominy and Reproach, what bitter Anguish and Remorse are inseparable from a *vicious* Course of Life; and, on the contrary,

Ser. VIII.] *stated and enlarged on.* 219

contrary, when we consider the blessed Effects of a religious Conduct; that we cannot perform one truly laudable Action, without its affording us a very sensible and lasting Pleasure; and that the Apostle is certainly not mistaken when he affirms that * “ *Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come;*” ——— when we seriously reflect on such Truths as these, it appears equally incredible that Virtue should ever be neglected, or Vice pursued. — But alas! What Numbers there are, who (trampling on all the Laws of Virtue and Honor) spend their whole Lives in one continued Round of Vanity and Folly! forgetful of that gracious Being, who is their Father and Protector; who is the sole Support of that Life, which they presumptuously waste in Defiance both

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of

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

of his Authority and his Goodness:—
 Mere nominal Christians! that are idly
 engaged thro' the whole Circle of Time,
 till they are lost in Eternity. And then
 will they be miserably convinced of their
 egregious Folly; how indiscreetly they
 have trod the Stage of Life; and wish
 (when it will be too late) that they had
 corrected their Errors, and regulated
 their Accounts betwixt their Maker and
 themselves, before the Scene had been
 shut up for ever.

Say, what can be the principal Cause
 of such unpardonable Conduct? Why is
 a Man who presumes to lay Claim to the
 sacred Title of a Christian; who pretends
 to believe that there is a God who will
 one Day † “*bring every Work into Judg-*
ment, with every secret Thing, whether
it be good, or whether it be evil;” and
 that

† Eccles. xii. 14.

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that *that* God sent his only begotten Son into the World, to shed upon it the Light of Immortality through that very Gospel which he assents to; why is such a one so strangely infatuated as to turn Rebel to the Authority of his own Reason, (that bright Eye of the intellectual Faculties) and to act in a Manner quite the Reverse of what he knows is right? Why does he forego all that is really worth living for; all that can be deemed a substantial Good? Why does he ruin his better Part, his immortal Soul, for a few trifling Gewgaws of a perishing World?—Doubtless such an unwarrantable Conduct must proceed, in a great Measure, from a Neglect of Self-Examination, and due Reflexion. In which Case, the Will, or “*the natural Man*,” surrenders to his corrupt Affections, and holds out against the fairest Remonstrances.—His Conscience indeed must inevitably give him

kind and repeated Calls, which may sometimes perhaps prove so successful as to check and alarm him; but they soon become unheeded Signals, and die upon his Ear. His Passions then take the Advantage of the unguarded Interval, and by frequent Attacks, subdue those Faculties which are the Light and Ornament of the human Soul,——his Reason and Understanding.

This was the Case of the inveterate Jews. They, who were distinguished with the Characteristic of “God’s peculiar People,” who had the frequent Privilege of our Saviour’s personal Appearance upon Earth, and ocular Demonstration of such Testimony as they could not resist, yet, in Opposition to all this, were † “*a People that would not hear his Voice, and Israel would not obey him.*”

Thus

† Psa. lxxxi. 12.

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Thus doth God himself complain by the Mouth of the holy Psalmist: And thus again, by his Prophet! * “ *My People doth not consider.*”

Such are the pernicious Effects of an inconsiderate Mind! that common Foe to Virtue, Honor, and Happiness, and that constant Friend to Vice, Disgrace, and Misery.

How different a Turn might it very probably produce in Persons of this unhappy Disposition, to embrace the Apostle's Advice in the Words of the Text! “ *Let every Man prove his own Work.*”

As the Sense of these Words manifestly implies the great Necessity of *Self-Examination*, I shall confine my present Meditations

218 *Self-Examination* [Ser. VIII.
Meditations to that singular Branch of
Duty.

“ *Let every Man prove his own Work.*”—
Let every Member of the Christian Family search the secret Recesses of his Heart, (that grand Spring of all human Action) and there inquire in what Manner the Dignity of his Profession is supported and maintained. Let him examine impartially into the State of his own Mind; and observe whether it *is*, or is *not*, zealously affected towards God and Religion? Let him prove his own Conduct by the Rules of the Gospel; try it how it will stand that noble Test; and thus clearly satisfy himself “ *whether he be in the Faith;*” whether he be a sound Member of that Body, of which Christ is the Head?—Such a nice and critical Inspection into your own Breasts, my Brethren, will be of far greater Benefit
both

Ser. VIII.] *stated and enlarged on.* 219

both to your present and future State of Being than I am able to describe.

The principal Enquiry, which concerns the Self-Examiner, is, whether he maintains a lively, and inflexible Faith, in the ever blessed Trinity? To form worthy Notions of the Attributes and Perfections of the omnipotent God, the precious and all-prevailing Merits of a crucified Redeemer, and the powerful Assistance, as well as sanctifying Operations of the holy Ghost, is the solid Basis of all Religion.

The first illustrious Proof of Christianity is experienced by entertaining the most sublime Conceptions of our adorable MAKER, and by paying him the high Honor and Worship due to that awful Name. Let us consult these faithful Advisers, our Consciences, whether
we

we adore and magnify in becoming Prayers and Praises the supreme and only Potentate of all the Earth?—Whether the warmest Emotions of a sincere Gratitude are excited, when we consider him under the most endearing Appellation of our best Benefactor? Whether we cultivate a filial Reverence for his paternal Authority, and tender Sentiments of Affection for his inexhaustible Goodness? Whether we extol him as our Creator, and love him as our Friend? Let us also ask ourselves these very material Questions: Have we at all Times, and upon all Occasions, placed a steady and unrivalled Confidence in his Power, Wisdom and Mercy? Do we trust in him as a Protection and Security from all Dangers, and lean upon him in all Adversities as our only Comfort and Support? Do we never vainly dispute the Order and Propriety of his Government, or presumptuously contend

Ser. VIII.] *stated and enlarged on.* 221

contend against the Administrations of his Providence? Do we never repine and murmur at, or droop under, any of those Afflictions or Calamities, which are either the false Coinage of a disordered Imagination; or the Product of our own Sins and Indiscretions; or perhaps brandished by an Almighty Arm for wise, though mysterious Reasons, beyond the Reach of all human Knowledge? But do we rather submit to the Decrees of Heaven with a chearful and composed Humility, and a perfect Acquiescence in the Almighty F I A T? rejoicing under this Assurance, that all Things conspire together for the eternal Interests of those who love God; who refer all their Wishes and Designs to his unerring Disposal; and who worship him in public and in private, in Sincerity, and in Truth.

The second distinguishing Criterion of Christianity is evidenced by a sound and rational

rational *Faith* in its great Founder Christ Jesus. In *This* Mirror can we see the Son of God himself, the Lord of all Nature, descending from the coelestial Mansions, divested of his Glory, and voluntarily sustaining the Miseries of corporeal Clay? Can we behold him thus eclipsing the Splendor of his Godhead, and softening it with the feeblér Rays of human Virtue? Can we view him also in his high ministerial Function, and hear him speak as never Man spake before? Being sensible of our diseased State, and that we are utterly incapable of effecting our own Recovery, do we believe that this divine Physician (according to the Gospel) was invested with a Power almighty to heal? That he administered infallible Medicines both to the Souls and Bodies of Men? and that, after a Life spent in Sufferings beyond a Parallel, and in a continued Progress of boundless Beneficence, and

immaculate

Ser. VIII.] *stated and enlarged on.* 223

immaculate Purity, that very Life was forfeited for our Sakes; to expiate the Sins of a guilty World? Do we hear that Voice, which, in the Depth of Agonies, pours out the melting Sounds of Mercy and Forgiveness? * “*Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do.*” Do we see that crimson Stream flowing from his Side? For, † “*One of the Soldiers with a Spear pierced his Side, and forthwith came thereout Blood and Water.*” In a Word, do we often, very often, entertain a tenderly pleasing Idea of the innocent, murdered Jesus pleading in Behalf of his Murderers? an adorable God in Man, expanded and expiring on a Cross?—And here now it is particularly incumbent upon us to examine whether the Love of this divine Benefactor is rooted in our Hearts? and whether we study how to cultivate and improve it into the Fruits

* Luke xxiii. 34.

† John xix. 34.

Fruits of Praises and Thanksgivings, agreeable to his sacred Character, and the Value of those ineffable Benefits, which he has conferred upon us? Has that his most gracious and condescending Office of a Mediator and Intercessor, a strong and prevailing Influence upon our Minds and Affections in every religious Duty? Are we struck with a deep Sense of our own lost Condition; and that it is through his Merits alone "that we can obtain" Remission of our Sins," and find Acceptance at the Hands of God?—He, who was no less than the only begotten of the eternal Father, the Emanation of his Glory, was the express Similitude of his Person, was the Messenger of Immortality to Man:—Is he therefore the Object of our most exalted Praise?—It was this pure and spotless Victim alone, the matchless and super-eminent Love of this mighty Prince of Peace, that cancelled that Debt, for which

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which all the Potentates of the Earth, and Principalities of Heaven, could not constitute an adequate Recompence:—Is he therefore the Object of our sincere Adoration?—It was still the same radiant Image of God, that burst open the Gates of this mental Chaos, and diffused the Lustre of his own all-cheering Sun over the benighted World; that called us forth out of dismal and horrid Darkness into gladsome and reviving Light; that, from the miserable Bondage of Corruption, and a State of the most abject Slavery, translated us into the Heirship of an incorruptible Inheritance, and into the Liberty of Sons of the Lord Jehovah:—Is he therefore the Object of our Heart-felt Gratitude and Love?—If we can reflect on all these stupendous Instances of our Saviour's unbounded Goodness, without rendering the most fervent and grateful Affection; if we, who, moulded by the

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Hand

Hand of Omnipotence, sprung from Nothing into Life, and from a rude and indigested Chaos, started into a World of Harmony and Order, a World replenished with Millions and Millions of Beings of our own Species, and an infinite Multiplicity of both Animals and Vegetables created for our Use; and who were also exalted from a State of Misery and Ruin to the Hopes of endless and inconceivable Happiness; if we, I say, who are thus highly favored of our God, can reflect on all this boundless and perfectly disinterested Beneficence, and yet not prefer the Love of HIM in Christ to all other Considerations, esteeming it our best and most delightful Study to please him,—then will the whole Creation cry aloud and exclaim against us, and bear Witness to the Vileness of our Ingratitude; and Redemption,—injured, lost Redemption, join the universal Testimony.

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An Intellectual Communication with the last Person in the ETERNAL THREE is an indispensibly necessary Proof of the true Christian Character. In Reference hereto, let us impartially examine our Consciences. Will they faithfully testify that we cherish lively Conceptions of this pure and individual Essence of God? Do we gratefully acknowledge the infinite Obligations we are under to this great Agent in the Gospel-Æconomy? Do we see the Necessity of his gracious Hand to conduct us through all the Vicissitudes of a precarious Life; to stimulate and support us through all the painful and perplexed Paths of Virtue, which lead to the Regions of substantial Bliss; and to preserve us from the too pleasing, flowery Walks of Vice, which terminate in certain Ruin? Strong in the Belief, and unshaken in the Confidence of this super-natural Power, the Saints of all

Ages, have escaped the Poison mixed with the delicious Draught of Sin; have utterly abandoned all the sordid, though inchanting Gratifications of Sense, as derogatory to their nobler Views; have spurned the forbidden Pleasures of this abject World; and, even while they dwell on Earth, conversed in Heaven. Yes, this has been the unanimous Declaration of them all,—* “*Not I, but the Grace of God*” “*which was with me.*”——And do we believe that the same tender Shepherd still condescends to feed his beloved Flock; that he transmits his Gifts to each successive Generation; and sheds his benign Influence on all the faithful Adherents on the Lamb? that it is He by whom § “*the Eyes of our Understanding are en-*” “*lightened; that we may know what is the*” “*Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches*” “*of the Glory of his Inheritance in the*” “*Saints?*”

* 1 Cor. xv. 10.

§ Ephes. i. 17, 18.

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“*Saints?*” and that it is He by whom alone we are abundantly “strengthened in the inner Man?” Do we believe that this invaluable Gift of the Holy Spirit, and a proper Reception of it, is as necessary and effectual in promoting the Salvation of the Soul, as daily Food, and a regular Digestion is to the Nutriment and Sustenance of the Body? When involved in Difficulties, or sunk in Afflictions, do we then address ourselves to this divine Person, emphatically styled the *Comforter*? Acknowledging our own Strength (comparatively speaking) to be Impotence, and our Wisdom Folly, do we most humbly and ardently implore his unerring Assistance to crown our feeble Efforts with Success? Do we ascribe to Him the Merit of every laudable Action, and even the Propensity of the Inclination preceding it? knowing that

† “*we are not sufficient of Ourselves to*

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“*think*

*“ think any Thing as of Ourselves: but that
“ our Sufficiency is of God;”* and that it is
He who * *“ worketh in us both to will and
“ to do of his good pleasure.”* Do we render Him the Praise and Honour due unto his Name, as he animates all the noblest Faculties of our Souls; and yet, far from requiring a Sacrifice of our own Abilities, demands our most strenuous Exertion of them in Concurrence with his divine Operations?—Finally, do we acknowledge that by his secret Inspiration the polluted Mind is cleansed and purified, and the Chains even of habitual Iniquity fall off? that it is this which softens the most obdurate Heart, and dissolves the Flint lodged in the impenitent Breast? that heals the Wounds of a bleeding Conscience, fortifies the Soul with invincible Resolution, and breathes into it the inexpressibly pleasing Hope of a blessed Immortality?

These

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These are the fundamental Principles of Christianity, which elaim the most attentive and impartial Consideration of the Self-Examiner. They are the Root from which all the other Branches of Religion derive their Existence.—However, as the real Worth of the former can only be attested by the latter; as the Tree can only be proved by its Productions; let us, in the next Place, carefully examine whether we are able to produce those true *Attestations* of Faith in the eternal Trinity, by which “*every Man should prove his own Work.*”——But these being too extensive to be included within the Compass of a single Discourse, I shall beg Leave to recommend them to your Attention some future Opportunity. 239

Yet allow me in the mean Time, to prevail upon you to consider yourselves as in the continual Prefence, and under

the immediate Inspection, of the omniscient God; and to strive to conduct yourselves accordingly. Consider that He sees all your Actions, counts all your Words, and pervades your most reclusive and concealed Thoughts. All these the Mouth of Inspiration declares we must one Day be accountable for; and that an irreverfible Appointment of eternal Rewards, or Punifhments, will be pronounced upon them. We are affured alfo, even beyond the Shadow of a Doubt, that *that* Day cannot be far diftant, and that we are advancing towards it nearer and nearer every Breath we draw.— Then fhall the proud infulting Sinner, who here lorded it over his poor Fellow-Creatures, and affumed the high and contemptuous, but more vain and contemptible Look, ftand dejected and abafhed. Whilft the humble and the contrite Penitent, who was perhaps held in Difdain and Derifion

Ser. VIII.] *stated and enlarged on:* 233

Derision here, shall lift up his Head with Courage, and partake of that compleat and unmingled Joy, which before he had but a faint Conception of. O let us with all possible Caution avoid the detestable Example of the one, and endeavor to confirm ourselves in the amiable Practices of the other. If we pretend to stand Candidates for a *future Life*, let not the fantastic Pleasures of the *present* engross our Affections, nor its wasting Interests our Care. But let us sacrifice every sinful Gratification to obtain the Favor of God, the Approbation of a serene Mind, and the immortal Happiness of Heaven. — Let us also view the Son of God in the most engaging Light of a Redeemer and Intercessor. Let us consider how much he has done, and suffered for us. And let the Excellence of his Doctrine instil into us a rational Faith, and the Transcendency of his Love an Obedience

dience to his Commands. Let us *prove our own Works*, by a laudable Imitation of *His*; and proclaim an undissembled Zeal for our Religion by copying the Life of its unblemished Author.—And lastly, acknowledging ourselves impotent in the Execution of, as well as in barely forming any good *Resolutions*, and also defective in the *Works* of our own Righteousness, let the *former* be always ushered in with fervent, and yet humble Addresses to the Holy Spirit, that he would be graciously pleased to ingraft, strengthen, and encourage them, and, for the Sake of Christ Jesus, to crown the *latter* with everlasting Success. And let us implore this sacred Guide, with unwearied Perseverance and Sincerity, to lead us at all Times safely through the mazy Labyrinth of our own Hearts, to purge them from every sinful Pollution, and disperse all the Mists of Partiality, Lust, or Passion, that settle there:

Ser. VIII.] *stated and enlarged on.* 235

there: often joining with holy David in the Petition, which concludes that remarkable Psalm, so justly admired for its beautiful and lively Strokes of Poetry;
* “ *Try me, O God, and seek the Ground of*
“ *my Heart: prove me, and examine my*
“ *Thoughts. Look well if there be any Way*
“ *of Wickedness in me: and lead me in the*
“ *Way everlasting.*”—May then that same great and omniscient Being, “ unto whom
“ all Hearts are open, all Desires known,
“ and from whom no Secrets are hid,
“ cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by
“ the Inspiration of his Holy Spirit; that
“ we may perfectly love him, and wor-
“ thily magnify his holy Name, through
“ Christ our Lord!” Amen.”

Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24.

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there: often joining with holy David in
the Psalms, which concludes that re-
markable strain, to fully adorned for his
beautiful and lively strokes of poetry;
"Tyrant, O God, and Father of David,
thy heart: power me, and comfort my
"Thine: look with love on me, and
"of David's: as thou art, and thou art
"thy mercy: say, then, I am
great and numerous: being, "and whom
"all things are good, and David knows
and thou knowest no secret: and thou
"cleans the Temple of our House by
the habitation of thy Holy Spirit: that
"we may perfectly love him, and wor-
"ship magnify the holy Name, through
"Christ our Lord, Amen."

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S E R M O N IX.

SELF-EXAMINATION further en-
quired into, with its Advantages.

GAL. vi. 4.

*Let every Man prove his own Work; and
then shall he have rejoicing in himself.*

S E R M O N IX.

SELF-EXAMINATION FURNISHES
pointed into, with Advantage



Let every Man place his own Work; and
then shall he have nothing in himself.

S E R M O N IX.

*Self-Examination further enquired into;
with its Advantages.*

G A L. vi. 4.

LET EVERY MAN PROVE HIS OWN
WORK; AND THEN SHALL HE HAVE
REJOICING IN HIMSELF.

SELF-EXAMINATION is one of the most necessary and beneficial Duties incumbent upon Man. And whoever neglects it must inevitably be a “Dissembler with God,” and his own Conscience. He will ever remain blind to his own Errors, and deaf to his injured Reason. Nay, he may almost fancy himself pursuing the Road to Life, while he actually treads the Paths of Death.

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I would particularly admonish a Person of this Character to resolve sometimes at least to stand still, and “*think on his Ways.*” Let him consider attentively whether he goes right or wrong? And whither the Road, which he now pursues, is likely to lead him?—Let him embrace the Advice recommended in the Words prefixed to this Discourse, by “*proving his own Work.*” Let him compare his Actions with his Heart, that faithful Touch-Stone of Sincerity, and his Heart with the Rules which are designed for his Direction in the sacred Writings; with the Life and Doctrine of that Person, who is the great Pattern of Goodness, and a sound Instructor of all who have Grace to listen to his divine Precepts.—Then must the long-worn Mask immediately drop off, and every lurking Vice appear in its proper Deformity. Then will he startle at his own insufferable Unworthiness

Unworthiness, disdain all Partiality and Deceit, and find no Peace till he has restored himself, by Humiliation and Repentance, thro' the Mediation of Christ, to the Favor of his offended God.—We can dedicate no Part of our Time to greater Advantage, than thus diligently to examine the State of our Consciences, and regulate our *Thoughts, Words, and Actions*. For when all Distinction of outward Forms and Profession ceases, when every Argument shall be absorbed in Assurance, and when Faith itself shall be lost in Conviction, *These* must stand the Trial for the whole Prize of Life, in the last decisive Day, at the Bar of infinite Wisdom, Justice, and Purity.

In a former Part of this Subject, we treated on the Nature of *Self-Examination*, as far as it relates to a sound and rational Faith in the ever blessed and glorious

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Trinity.—Let us now strictly examine, whether we possess those evident *Characteristics* of Faith, by which “*every Man*” “*should prove his own Work.*”

Not the warmest Pretensions to a Love of God; not the strongest Dependence on the Merits of our Saviour; not the highest Flights of enthusiastic Inspiration, will avail us in that Day, when * “*we*” “*must all appear before the Judgment-Seat*” “*of Christ,*” who will reward † “*every*” “*Man according as his Work shall be,*” unless our Conduct in general is consistent with the Professions we make. To be zealously affected in a good Cause is certainly right. But never can a holy Zeal, never can a saving Faith be established on the Ruins of Reason and Morality. Never can they be designed by their wise Author, “*who is of purer Eyes*” “*than*

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

† Rev. xxii. 12.

“*than to behold,* (or countenance) *In-*
“*iquity,*” as a Cloak to the Gratifications
of Vice. No! They cannot be vindicated
by any other Means, than a sincere
Study to please God, and promote the
Happiness of Man. These are the
Springs from whence our Zeal should
flow: These the laudable Motives, by
which to regulate its *Pathos*, and form
its Government.

It was our blessed Lord’s] direct In-
ference, that we should testify our Love
for his Name, by living in Conformity
to his Will. † “*If ye love me,*” says he,
“*keep my Commandments:*” As if he had
thus declared;—All your boasted Ex-
pressions, and external Declarations of
Love, I shall regard only as the deceit-
ful Exercise of your Lips, proceeding
from the wild Sallies of the Brain, which

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the Heart knows Nothing of, except ye adhere to the Rules which I have given you for the Model of your Lives.—Let this sacred Injunction then, which has others innumerable to enforce it, be the Standard of all our Actions. And let us take particular Notice, without flattering ourselves in a Matter of such infinite Concern, how our Accounts, in every Respect, stand betwixt God and our own Consciences. Let us endeavour to contract an habitual Recollection of all our Ways. And let us trace our whole Conduct from the very Birth of Memory to the present Moment.—Do we find, upon an unprejudiced Review of Life, that we have preserved, in general, an even Tenor of Obedience to the Laws of the most high God? Do we proclaim our Sentiments of their Excellence, Justice, and Purity, by a practical Adherence to them? Are we studious

dious to become still more and more conformed to their Authority? Are we steady in our Resolutions to conquer every Vice, to which, from the Force of Habit, or our own natural Bent of Constitution, we perceive ourselves the most strongly addicted? Can we challenge our Hearts to produce a secret Reserve of any reigning Passion, or favorite Sin? And, like the indignant Rustic rooting the Thistle out of his Corn, is it our inflexible Purpose to eradicate every poisonous Weed that grows there? Can we chearfully renounce the most inveterate evil Habits, and cause all the fiery Darts of Temptation to recoil, sooner than offend our Creator in any single Instance of Duty? In a Word, are we equally determined to use our best Endeavors, under the Influence of Grace, to comply with every heavenly Precept, and abstain from every Divine

Prohibition? to sacrifice all the sordid Interests, or Pleasures of a sublunary State, to the true Enjoyment of a tranquil Mind, and a well-grounded Hope of reaping those Treasures that are immortal and immense?

But since Infirmities are the natural Portion of Humanity, and even the best of Men cannot always stand upright, since the Violence of the Passions will sometimes conquer the Power of Reason, and the most wakeful Sense of Virtue sleep under a near and pressing Temptation; let us recognize, with all possible Minuteness, our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, and sift the good from the bad: Let us carefully attend to every Step where we have gone astray; and not suffer one unrepented-of Crime to disturb our Peace.——Without this needful Caution, the Services of the most just
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and upright will be fruitless and ineffectual. This is the ultimate Point, to which all our self-Inquiries should be directed.-----And surely no Degree of Wickedness can ever stand the Test of serious Consideration. When a Man can once prevail upon himself to sit coolly down, and recollect the Miscarriages of his past Life, as well as anticipate the Punishments denounced against the obdurate Wicked, he cannot but feel such a Sensation as was never known to him before; every presumptuous Offence must unavoidably strike him with a nameless Horror, and every secret Pollution engage his Affiduity to be cleansed from it. The one he will highly censure, and the other deeply regret. Finding, in this dismal, but absolutely necessary and advantageous Retrospect, no Refuge in himself, no Shelter from Heaven's impending Storm, he will then

fly for Security to the pardoning Mercies of God displayed in the all-sufficient Love of his Redeemer; by no Means neglecting to importune for such a Measure of Grace, as will bring him off triumphant in all his future Engagements both with Sin and Misery.

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Another very material Article, which may well be included in this Subject, and which requires a more than ordinary Attention, is to inquire strictly into the *genuine Motive* of our Actions. For it is this, and this only, which gives a Color to them all. If this is not right, our best Employments, which, in a literal Sense, are certainly Praise-worthy, will be fruitless in Reality, and even a regular Obedience, confined to the Deed itself, will forfeit all its Worth. The sober Moralist, the daring Champion in rigid Virtue's Cause, may wrap himself
closely

closely in his own Integrity; his Integrity may be supported by Reason, and his Reason refined by Education;—nay, (if you will admit the Supposition to be practicable) let him not deviate from a single Precept contained in the moral Law; and yet, after all, he shall never reap his expected Harvest, nor be crowned with those triumphant Laurels, which are promised to every faithful Soldier of Christ.—A Paradox indeed!—It shall be solved immediately.—The human Sight is weak and defective, and liable to be dazzled with external Forms. It can discern no further than the bare Surface of the Man. But the Eye of Heaven penetrates into every Corner of the Heart, and sees all that works there.—From thence, however, you assert, proceeds every voluntary Action, whether it be good or bad.—Let this be granted.—You still insist that every Fact proves itself,

itself, and is discernible to others as well as its proper Agent; and if it is good in its own Nature, it must be beneficial, according to its Extent and Degree.—

This is granted likewise.—But you will further urge, that all Deeds which are beneficial to Man, must in Consequence thereof be pleasing to God; as Beneficence is one of his great Commands, comes nearest to one of his own most amiable Attributes, and shone with peculiar Lustre in the bright Example of Jesus Christ.—In this Advancement is couched the Error to be corrected.—That worthy Actions are the only apparent Evidences of a worthy Heart, and the only Channel thro' which is conveyed to us a Knowledge of Good and Evil, is not to be denied. Nor can any one be a true Disciple of Christ, who is not a zealous Advocate for good Works, and diligent in executing the Orders of his great Lord
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and Master: But what we are fairly to scrutinize into, is the *Motive* that gives *Birth* to our Actions. Without a pious Sincerity *here*, there can be no possible Virtue. The Act, tho' commendable in itself, will vanish into Nothing before the all-seeing God. It can never stand the Proof of a Divine Examination.— Lest my Meaning should be misinterpreted, a few Instances will render it clear and intelligible.

We will particularize first the grateful Homage of *Prayer*, or the sublime Flights of *Praise*; the outward Characters of which are more expressive of a Godlike Genius, and (when exhibited with a sincere Ardor) perhaps accompanied with more Divine Feelings, than any Employment upon Earth:—Both these are liable to be perverted. The lifted up Hand, and the bended Knee, may convey to
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us the Signs of Worship and Humiliation, and the Lips breathe out the Incense of public Adoration and Thanksgiving, and yet not a Spark of Piety be kindled in the Breast. What abominable Hypocrisy is this! Here the Act, beheld in an abstracted View, is graceful and becoming, and irresistibly wins upon us; and the Tribute is such, according to its specious Appearance, as is worthy to be paid by an obliged Creature to his benign Creator. But "God judgeth not as Man judgeth." He rests not on bare Speculation, but on the Mind's full Purport and Intent. He knows that all this outward Figure is but false Coloring; an idle Show directed merely by Form and Custom. His keen Eye darts thro' the Hypocrite's thick-woven Mask. He sees the Phantom of Religion flutter upon his Tongue, whilst Infidelity, or something worse than Infidelity dwells at his Heart.

Heart. For what else are a Parcel of Words, if not prompted by this Dictator? Can Piety and Holiness be truly supposed to consist in these? No: They blush to hear those airy Sounds that have no Meaning: The varnished Sepulchre they disdain to look upon. Their sovereign Author too, by his own just Contempt and Abhorrence, vindicates theirs. For * “ *the Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord; but the Prayer of the Upright is his Delight.*” Yes, one single Wish, sent from a sincere and truly penitential Breast, will find its Way to the Throne of Mercy, whilst all formal Petitions, and deceitful Addresses, are hateful to the Ear of God. Tho’ Actions as well as Words, may, in some Instances, delude and impose upon our Brethren of Mankind, short-sighted Mortals like ourselves, it is to the Rectitude of the Heart alone, that He who cannot be deceived

* Prov. xv. 8.

ceived will lend his Regard.——This should be rendered expreffive with Sincerity to the omniscient God, as the Lips are with Utterance to our Fellow-Creatures; and the Language of true Holiness and unaffected Piety should flow from hence, as Expressions from the Mouth.

If, in the next Place, we have Respect unto the Duty of *Beneficence*, we shall find it equally liable to be adulterated and abused. I instance only that single Branch of this extensive Virtue, commonly called *Almsgiving*. Our generous Laws, in Regard to this provisionary Article, are meritorious and Praise-worthy: But this does not enhance the Merit of Individuals. *Compulsive* Virtue is an improper Term: It is no Virtue at all.——*Ostentation* also, which, under this Instance, is the capital Error intended to be reprov'd,

reproved, is often mistaken for real Charity; and many there are who out of their Abundance cast much into the Treasury, not a Mite of which will turn to Advantage in that Day, when Accounts shall be fairly adjusted before God and the holy Angels. The Reason is manifestly this; that the Design of their Liberality is to catch the vain Applause of the World, instead of obtaining the Approbation of Him who should influence all our Actions.—* “ *Give Alms of thy Goods, and*
“ *never turn thy Face from any poor Man,*
“ *and then the Face of the Lord shall not be*
“ *turned away from thee,*” is a tenderly affecting Expression; and while its Tenderness excites our Affection, the Benefit annexed to an Observance of the Command must greatly encourage every religious Man to deal his Bread to the hungry, and reach his Cup to the thirsty Lip. A
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* Job iv. 7.

full Expectation of the Light of God's Countenance shining upon us, is the only valuable Motive to a Performance of this Duty. † "*Take Heed then that ye do not your Alms before Men to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no Reward of your Father which is in Heaven.*"—Nay, Compassion itself is by no Means to stand in Competition with the divine Mandate. The Plea of the Neceſſitous indeed, is very ſtrong and perſuaſive; and there is a ſilent Eloquence in Diſtreſs, which, ſuperior to the fineſt Rhetoric, ſoftens the moſt flinty Heart, and almoſt forces it to ſhare in the Sufferings of a poor Fellow-Creature. But even *this* Motive, eſſential as it is, and tho' it cannot fail to attract the Benevolence and Eſteem of Man, does not reach to the Dignity and Perfection of that Character, which, in the figurative Senſe, "*lays up in Store a*
good"

† Matt. vi. 1.

“good Foundation against the Time to
 “come.” This cannot be effected but
 by * “honoring the Lord with our Sub-
 “stance;” that is, by entertaining a com-
 passionate Regard for the human Spe-
 cies, founded on a cordial Love of the
 Supreme Being. For *His* Sake it is that
 we should supply the Wants of the
 Needy, and break the Bonds of the op-
 pressed; pour Balm into every Wound,
 . and dry up every Tear we see. The
 primary Intention of the Heart is to be
 dedicated only to *Him*. Then will every
 worthy Action rest on a sound Basis, and
 prove a Blessing upon the Head of its
 Author. Otherwise to extend our Com-
 passion and Assistance, tho’ to the wor-
 thiest and and most miserable Objects, is
 nothing more than soothing a delicate Dis-
 position, for the Privilege of which we
 are indebted to Nature. This is only a
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temporary Satisfaction, which just smiles upon the Act, but will find no Place in the eternal Kingdom.

Sobriety, that comprehensive Term, is another Instance, by which, without a careful Inspection into our real Character, we may easily be deceived in the Opinion we form of ourselves.—So numerous are the bad Effects of Intemperance, in Reference to Health, Reputation, and Fortune, that it is possible to abstain from all the several Degrees of this Vice, for the Sake of possessing these earthly Blessings, exclusive of the least Honor or Regard due to God.—But where then is the Merit of such a Conduct? Piety cannot claim the smallest Share in it. And how many unhappy Wretches there are, who, having sapped the Foundation of their Health in Luxury and Lust, lament for ever after the

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Loss of this invaluable Jewel! How many too bewail the irreparable Injury, which their own Mis-Conduct has entailed upon their Character! And how sensibly does the Prodigal regret the Subversion of his Fortune, and, with that, the Ruin perhaps of several innocent Persons, incurred by his own Folly and Extravagance! But where is the Repentance? It never can consist in bathing with false Tears a Wound which your own Hand has made.—Where, either the Practice of Sobriety is supported, or the Loss of it deplored, from a bare Concern for any temporal Advantages or Endowments, and a reverential Respect to God shut out of the Account, there is only the Shadow of Religion without its Substance. To suppose that Religion centers in Morality alone, is harboring a chimerical Notion. It is building all our Hopes of

Happiness on a sandy Basis. Divinity and Morality should be Companions inseparably connected.—Their kindred Streams should flow on constantly together. And as God is the great Original, the pure Fountain of all Goodness, so no Action can be deemed truly good, either pleasing to Him, or beneficial to Ourselves, which is not derived from this grand Source.

I might particularize several other Virtues, that appear outwardly fair, shining before Men in all their usual Splendor, and yet, for Want of a laudable Motive, lose all their inward Worth:—But let it be sufficient to observe at once, that the Praise and Glory of our Maker should be the principal Spur to every Virtue, and that this indissoluble Chain (i. e. *Joseph's* Expostulation with his Mistress) should be laid on the Neck of every

every Vice,—* “*Can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” HE is the glorious Object to which our strictest Attention should be directed in every Step of Life.

Thus have I assayed to draw out a Plan of the extensive Duty of Self-Examination. The Representation is but feeble and defective. It is my ardent Wish that you may transpose it into your own Breasts, and be enabled to improve it there by Grace, Faith, and Practice: To promote this End, I would yet further recommend it to your Observation, that a frequent Retirement from the World and all its anxious Cares, is the most favorable Opportunity for the Entertainment of good and profitable Reflexions; and for these also to make the deepest and most lasting Impression.—

This is the Time to regulate our Thoughts, and to search into all the dark Recesses of the Mind. The Hurry of Business confuses our Ideas, and the giddy Noise of Company sequesters our Attention from better Employments. But in *Solitude* all is calm and tranquil: We steal away from the great Stage of Action, and bid Defiance to each alluring Scene. Every Object around us proclaims the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of the Deity, and naturally disposes the Soul to serious Recollection. We are strongly invited to view ourselves in a comparative Light with all other Creatures, and to consider with an attentively pleasing Gratitude, the superior Design of our own Creation. Here we may enter into a divine Correspondence without Ridicule, and dwell upon it without Interruption. The Derision of the Fool is banished; and the dire Sound of the Wicked, together
with

with their horrid Deeds, here, as in the Grave itself, "*cease from troubling.*"—All is peaceful and serene. And Silence is the most eligible Society. We may here hold the Mirror to our Breasts, and take a clear and distinct View how Matters are conducted there. Here we may see the hidden Springs of all our Actions, and discover in what Manner each powerful Temptation points its Darts.—In Sum, it is here only that we can dive into ourselves, and have the fairest Occasion offered to us, without any Importunity from outward Occurrences, of freely "*proving our own Work.*"—Such, O Solitude! is the tranquil Pleasure, and such (under the Influence of divine Grace) are the real Comforts and Advantages that attend on Thee.

The natural Result of the Christian's Self-Inquiry, or Survey of his past Life,

is an earnest Application to Penitence and Virtue: the happy Consequence of which is elegantly expressed in the latter Part of the Text; “ *he shall have rejoicing in himself.*” His Happiness does not depend on casual Circumstances, or external Aids: He borrows not his Joy from the capricious Smiles of Fortune, or the fluctuating Favors of the Great; but has a perennial Fund *within*,—“ *he is satisfied from himself.*” If such a one prospers in the World, and the Days of Sunshine smile upon him; this adds a Lustre to his Virtues; his Honor and his Affluence afford a double Relish. The Current of his Life is pure and serene; not ruffled by the Storms of Passion, or darkened by the tempestuous Showers of Guilt: His secular Affairs move on with Evenness and Tranquility; perfectly satisfactory to the happy Man himself, and beneficial to all around him. On
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the contrary; if the impending Clouds of *Adversity* obscure his Merit; tho' he be impoverished by the repeated Strokes of Providence, threatened by the Contumely of the Proud, and exposed to the Insults of the Prophane; he is still rich in the Possession of Grace, easy in a self-approving Conscience, and honored by the concurring Approbation of the great God. Secure under such a Shelter, what Dangers can disturb, much less, what Terrors break his Peace? If the Storms abroad are never so tempestuous; let them blow from every Quarter of the Globe; he is still calm and unruffled at Home.—Does his Character, which is of more sterling Worth than the precious Mines of Jewels, suffer from the venomous Tongue? If the Aspersions thrown against him are not without Foundation, he invokes the Aid of God's Holy Spirit to corroborate his good Resolutions,

solutions, that he may reform his Life. If they are groundless, he pities the Propagators, but cannot be robbed of the comfortable Testimony of his own Breast. It is indeed impossible not to feel the Sharpness of such a Sting, which perhaps no earthly Medicine can extract; but he is still a *Goshen* to himself; he rejoices in a GOOD HEART towards the Lord, and sits victoriously smiling at his own Distress.—Is he not only calumniated and reviled, but undeservedly persecuted, and personally injured?—He safely leans upon Omnipotence as his strong Pillar, and joins in that noble Declaration with the Prince of Israel,

* “ *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom then shall I fear; The Lord* (with an Air of Joy and Triumph, he repeats both his Confidence and his Challenge) “ *is the Strength of my Life; of* “ *whom*

* Psa. xxvii. 2.

“ *whom then shall I be afraid?*”—Does he labor under any languishing Disease, or struggle under acute Pains of Body? —The Rectitude of his Mind is superior to all Afflictions. He acquiesces in the Almighty’s infinitely wise Disposals, and, with *Eli*, testifies his Resignation and Humility, in that pious and exemplary Expression, † “ *It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.*” Always steady to, and exulting in, this Affiance; that tho’ ‡ “ *Heaviness may endure for a Night, yet Joy cometh in the Morning;*”—in that everlasting Morning, to be succeeded by no Night at all. This is an Expectation which enlivens the blackest Gloom. It reconciles him to every Kind of Adversity, and to every Degree of Pain. ——— Thus shall “ *every Man, who proves his own Work, have rejoicing in himself.*” He shall be able to refine upon

upon the Joys of Prosperity, and stand unshaken against Adversity's severest Storms. And when both one and the other shall arrive at their final Period, when the Veil of this mortal Clay shall be worn out, and all the Shadows of Joy and Grief shall be dispersed; he shall then solace himself in the full Perfection of Bliss, the un-embittered Enjoyments of Eternity.

May then that gracious Being, who is the great Author of all temporal Comfort, and eternal Joy, shed on every individual Member of his Church, the benign Influence of his Holy Spirit, and pour upon us the Abundance of his own most effectual Aids, thro' Jesus Christ! that we may be enabled to advance daily in the *Knowledge of ourselves*; being convinced how greatly conducive this is to our endless Honor and Happiness.—

And

And may it also be particularly remembered, that such a Knowledge can be no otherwise conducive to this most essential Point, than as it promotes the delightful Exercise of PENITENTIAL PIETY, and PURITY of MANNERS!

This I pray God grant, for the Sake, and thro' the Merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour: To whom, with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, &c.

Amen.

S E R.

And may it also be particularly
perceived, that such a knowledge can be no
otherwise conducive to this most essential
Point, than as it promotes the delightful
Exercise of PENITENTIAL PIETY,
and PURITY of MANNER.

This I pray God grant for the sake
and thro' the Merits of Christ Jesus our
Saviour: To whom, with the Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, &c.

Amen.

S E R M O N X.

The Reasonableness and Propriety of
sensual Mortification.

COLOSS. iii. 5.

*Mortify therefore your Members which are
upon the Earth.*

SERMON X.

The Reasonableness and Propriety of
the Moral Law.



Alors, there is a great deal of
reason in the Law.

S E R M O N X.

*The Reasonableness and Propriety of sensual
Mortification.*

COLOSS. iii. 5.

**MORTIFY THEREFORE YOUR MEMBERS
WHICH ARE UPON THE EARTH.**

THE Passions of the Mind are the
main Springs of Action. And that
Variety of them which is implanted
there, proves at once the Power and
Wisdom of God, and the probationary
State of Man. Without these, Virtue
would be divested of all her Charms,
(which are so much improved by the
Strength of Resistance) and Vice would
lose its Name. Nay, without These all
human Life would stagnate, and we should

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be

be destitute of the Power of exerting those Faculties, which so eminently distinguish us in the visible Creation. The Will, considered abstractedly, is naturally sluggish and quiescent, and it is necessary it should be actuated by the Passions' gentle Gales; which are just as useful to the *mental* Constitution, as the Circulation of the Blood is to the *animal*: They preserve and maintain its Strength and Activity. And yet these very Passions, which are the Springs of Nature, unless kept under due Regulation, and confined within the Limits of Reason, will quite mislead us in the spiritual Race, and hurry us on to total Ruin. They are the Forerunners of that long Train of Vices, and the innumerable Miseries (the natural Consequence of those Vices) which are so closely connected with the human Mind. We cannot charge *Reason* with so disingenuous, and false an Accusation.

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From so pure a Fountain such disturbed Streams can never be supposed to flow. It is *Her* Business to preside over the Passions, and inure them to Subjection. Of These she should entertain a strong and lasting Jealousy, and be constantly guarded against any of their Attacks. For tho' the Force of them indeed is much strengthened, or impaired, according to the different Influence of the Constitution, Prosperity and Adversity, or other similar Causes, yet the Seeds are sown in every Breast; which, without proper Care and Vigilance, will not only take a deep and fixed Root, but naturally sprout forth, and destroy the Man. And yet no one can justifiably plead, from the innate Power of the Passions, an Excuse for any sinful Compliances. Because our gracious Creator has endowed us with Reason for this very Purpose,—to enable us to restrain every inordinate

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Appetite, and preserve the Dignity of
immortal Beings.]

It is the Libertine's presumptuous Plea, that it can surely be no Offence to comply with the Bent of our own Nature, and to gratify those Desires, which God has made a part of the human Frame itself.——Such an Argument as this, might indeed suit the Mouth of an *Epicurean* Disciple, whose great Maxim is, “*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:*” But it cannot stand a Moment before the Light of the Gospel-Dispensation. This teaches us a Doctrine of a different Kind. We are here exhorted to * “*take no Thought* (or, according to the Original, not to be too anxious) “*for what we shall eat, or what we shall drink.*” And St. Peter admonishes us to † “*abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against* “*the*

* Mat. vi. 31.

† 1 Pet. ii. 11.

Ser. X.] *ſensual Mortification.* 277

“ *the Soul :*” And St. Paul alſo, in the Words of the Text, to “ *mortify our Mem-
bers which are upon the Earth.*” And to answer the ſame wiſe and beneficial Purpoſes, were Reaſon and Underſtanding beſtowed on Man. It is the Voice of Theſe as well as of Inſpiration, that the Duty of Man is to curb the wild Sallies of every head-ſtrong Paſſion, and moderate his Affections for the Pleaſures of a fleeting Life. Why elſe is he diſtinguiſhed by the peculiar Characteriſtic of—Lord of this lower World ; by the Capacity of enjoying a real Senſe of Pleaſure, proceeding from every laudable Action, and feeling a ſecret Check of Conſcience, whenever he acts amiſs ; and ſtill more particularly by that Divinity that ſtirs within him, and intimates an Eternity of Rewards, or Punishments, which ſhall be the certain Conſequence

T 3 of

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of his Conduct in this short Scene of
Trial?

The Brute-Creatures, that are driven by the mere Impulse of Instinct and Nature, act *according* to that Instinct, and answer the Design for which they were created. But does Man answer the noble Design of his Creation, when he surrenders himself a Slave to the Tyrants of his own Breast, a Dupe to every sportive Passion? No! He derogates from the Superiority of his Species, frustrates the grand Purpose for which he was sent into the World, and throws himself upon a Level with the Brutes that perish.— And, which is yet far worse than all the rest, unless a timely and severe Repentance takes Place, he renders himself both miserable in this Life, and utterly disqualified for a Portion of the Inheritance in an eternal State.

But

But the Libertine, to justify, or at least palliate the Horror of his licentious Practices, will further urge; that, considering the Weakness of human Nature, on the one Hand, and the Strength of Temptations that continually assault it, on the other, we must inevitably deviate from those rigorous Duties which God has enjoined; for how is it possible for frail Man to *mortify* those *Members* which are united to the Body itself; born with it; of its own Nature; and by that very Nature addicted to those Pleasures, which are so strictly prohibited? This is the capital Plea of the unhappy Sensualist. —But how vain and groundless such an Assertion is, appears by the best Support that can be produced in Favor of any Argument; and that is, *absolute Fact*; — by that illustrious Catalogue of Worthies, that noble Army of Martyrs, who honored God in their Lives, and in their

Deaths magnified his holy Name. Can we reflect on the many Self-Denials, the many and great Atchievements of those suffering Heroes, recorded in different Parts of Scripture, and then presume to assert, that the most importunate Solicitations of Sense, are not to be resisted, the highest Part of Virtue not to be attained? How eminently did They shine in all the Graces that can dignify the Christian Name; in Temperance, in Meekness, in Patience, in Charity; in a steady Fortitude under the severest Trials; in a chearful Submission to many great and complicated Hardships; in a noble Contempt of Injuries, and—Death itself! It would carry me beyond the Limits of a Discourse to enumerate all those glorious Examples, which adorn the Pages of either the Old or New Testament. Let it be sufficient to observe, that, being united, they compose that

“ Cloud

"*Cloud of Witnesses,*" whose Power of Conviction no idle Rhetoric can refute, no Cunning can evade, no vain Philosophy explain away. These are they who * "*subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtained Promises, stopped the Mouths of Lions:*" These are they who † "*were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the Sword; who wandered about in Sheep Skins, and Goat-Skins; destitute, afflicted, tormented.*"—And were not these distinguished Patterns of Virtue ‡ "*Men subject to like Passions as we are?*" Were they not exposed to the same alluring Objects to engage their Attention? And had they not the same Capacity of Pleasures and Enjoyments, the same tender Feelings of Pain and Grief? And after all, were they possessed of any Advantages superior to those which we are blessed with? We have the

* Heb. xi. 33.

† Heb. xi. 37.

‡ James v. 17.

the Mercies of God in Christ displayed in an endless Variety of Instances; and we have the same free and most gracious Offers of his *holy Spirit*, to support, and conduct us.

The Occasion is favorable, from the Mention of this inestimable Privilege, to remind you of that tender Promise of our blessed Lord, * “*your heavenly Father will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him.*” This levels at once all the Arguments that ever *were*, or *can be*, advanced in the Cause of Libertinism, on a supposed Impossibility of conquering the Temptations of Vice. Only implore the divine Assistance of your heavenly Father with faithful and sincere Hearts, and, depend upon it, the Violence and Impetuosity of your Passions shall be abated, your Infirmities shall be strengthened,

* Luke xi. 13.

ened, and ye shall be enabled to co-operate with that Grace, which conquers every Temptation. Our Apostle confirms my Paraphrase on this Assurance. For we are † “*strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man.*” And again; ‡ “*The Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities.*” And again, addressing himself to the Corinthians, he is very expressive; § “*God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*” This clearly imports, that our good God proportions the Power of every Temptation incident to Man, to his Ability of resisting it; and that He will not subject him to any heavier Burthen than he shall be enabled (unless defeated by his own Folly) to sustain. A very consolatory Truth this!

A great

† Ephes. iii. 16.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.

§ 1 Cor. x. 13.

A great Encouragement to the godlike Mind to continue its Progress in the Paths of Virtue, unbiaſſed [by the ſudden Interruption of any intruding Vice; and an absolute Confutation of the Sinner's abſurd Reasonings, which are founded on no other Baſis than that of a BAD HEART.

Thus Reason, Example, Scripture, all conſpire to prove the Poſſibility of ſubduing our predominant Paſſions, and of oppoſing the whole Torrent of Vice; or, in other Words, of "*mortifying our Members which are upon the Earth.*"

But to be more particular.—In the Verſes preceding the Text, we are exhorted to "*ſeek thoſe Things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right Hand of God;*" and to fix our Affections there, and "*not on Things on the Earth:*"

And

And on this Condition it is, that “*when*
 “*Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then*
 “*shall we also appear with him in Glory.*”
 And then the Apostle directly subjoins,
 “*mortify therefore (or for this very Reason,*
 because such Happiness is conditional)
 “*your Members which are upon*
 “*the Earth.*” He then particularizes the
 Sins to which he supposes human Nature
 to be generally addicted, (viz.) “*Fornica-*
 “*tion, Uncleannefs, inordinate Affection,*
 “*evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness*
 “*which is Idolatry. For which Things*
 “*Shall the Wrath of God cometh on the*
 “*Children of Disobedience.*” These are
 the dangerous Rocks which so many
 Thousands have split upon: These the
 fatal Crimes, which so frequently bring
 down the heavy Judgments of God upon
 his rebellious Children. And we may
 be fully convinced, that whenever we
 transgress the Bounds which God has
 prescribed,

prescribed, violate any of his Laws, and make Reason, Virtue, or whatever is truly honorable, subservient to the unsatisfied Cravings of Appetite, we not only degrade the Dignity of our Nature, but for the Sake of a few fallacious, momentary Pleasures, become obnoxious to the “*Pains of eternal Death.*”

Wherever we find the Impression of a divine Seal; whatever Command carries this Sanction along with it; there should both our Attention and Affections be particularly engaged.—This of itself ought to be a sufficient Recommendation to those People who pass under the Denomination of CHRISTIANS. But when we further consider, that if we act in Conformity to the Rule of God's Commandments, we shall certainly “*appear with him in Glory;*” and, on the contrary, that “*the Wrath of God cometh*”
“*on*”

“on the Children of Disobedience;” plainly, that an Eternity of Happiness or Misery in a *future* World, depend on our Behaviour in *this*; this surely should induce us to “*mortify the Lusts that are in*” “*our Members,*” above all other Arguments that can be offered, and in Defiance of any Temptations that may fall in our Way.

It is indeed a deplorable Truth, and such as admits of no Dispute, that the dire Effects of *original Sin*, are entailed upon the whole Race of Adam. That inward Depravity, that natural strong Propensity to Evil, which began to reign in the first Ages of the World, and has been since transferred to all Posterity, still sticks closely to us, and requires the steadiest Resolution, and the most vigorous Application of all our Faculties to subdue. To mortify the Lusts and
Appetites

Appetites of our Nature; to cool the Ferment of our Passions, when alarmed by any sudden and powerful Temptation; to repel the Force, and resist the subtle Attacks of our grand Enemy, who watches our Inclinations, and nicely strikes in with our several Humors and Dispositions; in Sum, to eradicate those noxious Weeds, that grow in our own Breasts, and to conquer all the Delusions of a vain but enchanting World, is confessedly a Work of the utmost Difficulty, and such as will cost us many hard and painful Struggles to discharge.

But let us now impartially examine, whether an habitual Indulgence of our *earthly Members* will not incur upon us a more real, and lasting Misery, and actually prove a Work of greater Labor, than a virtuous Mortification of them can be supposed ever to be attended with?

a single Hour! — And when Luxury is sated, and Imagination itself is cloyed, how basely, but how much in vain, does he employ his injured Reason (that celestial Lamp, which was lighted in him for a quite different Purpose) to assist the Relish of his palled Appetites, and to feed each dying Flame! — View the proud, ambitious Mortal, who pants after popular Breath, and fondly courts the fantastic Applause of an undistinguishing Multitude! With how much Toil and Labor does the towering Pigmy explore the giddy Height of Fame! laying every Obstacle in his Passage waste before him: And how bitter is the Anguish of Disappointment, when he fails of gaining the much-wished-for Point! And should he prove so successful as to arrive even at the Summit of his Wishes, Disappointment (though in a different Garb) haunts him still; he proves all the delightful

lightful Promises he made to himself false; all the visionary Glories of the Prospect vanish; Expectation is dashed; and—**ALL IS VANITY.**—Ah! Thrice welcome, humble, solitary Virtue! May thou never be acquainted, but at a distant View, with the Pangs of Pageantry and Pomp! But maintain that true, that inward Happiness which is all thy own; which all the various Pleasures of a deceitful World are incapable of bestowing! How calm and tranquil is thy obscure State! And how infinitely more eligible than his, who catches at the mere Phantoms of Bliss, and grasps the glittering Bubbles of an empty Name!

It is evident from what has been already advanced, in Relation to the three leading Principles of all Manner of Vice, viz. *Avarice, Licentiousness, and Ambition,* that an Indulgence of our *earthly Mem-*

bers is productive of much Care and Anxiety, Discredit and Disease, continual Fretting, and bitter Disappointment: the Violence and Impetuosity of the Passions destroying the very Relish they were designed to afford.—But I have hitherto insisted only on the least material Part of the Argument. That secret Torture and Remorse, which is inseparable from Guilt, the severe Lashes and Stings of an Evil Conscience, “that Self-
“ Wickedness which corrects, and that
“ Backsliding which reproves,” far surpass all the external Afflictions, or bodily Pains (insupportable as they seemingly are) which the profligate Sinner incurs upon himself. * “*The Spirit of a Man,*” says Solomon, “*will sustain his Infirmities; but a wounded Spirit who can bear?*” And how strong and expressive is that terrible Denunciation threatened against

* Prov. xviii. 14.

against the Children of Disobedience in the following Passage! † “The Lord shall
 “ give you a trembling Heart, and failing
 “ of Eyes, and Sorrow of Mind. And thy
 “ Life shall hang in Doubt before thee;
 “ and thou shalt fear Day and Night, and
 “ shalt have none Assurance of thy Life,—
 “ In the Morning thou shalt say, Wou’d God
 “ it were Even; and at Even thou shalt
 “ say, Wou’d God it were Morning.” In
 what moving Eloquence also does the
 penitential Psalmist describe the painful
 and distressed Condition of Vice!——

‡ “Thine Arrows stick fast in me, and thy
 “ Hand presseth me sore. There is no
 “ Health in my Flesh because of thy Dis-
 “ pleasure; neither is there any Rest in my
 “ Bones by Reason of my Sin.——For my
 “ Wickednesses are gone over my Head; and
 “ are like a sore Burthen, too heavy for me
 “ to bear.” But what strikes us most is

Isaai

U 3

the

† Deut. xxviii. 65, 66, 67.

‡ Psa. xxxviii. 2, 3, 4.

the dreadful *Foreboding* of Guilt, the dismal *Apprehension* of those Pains that will have no Period: § “*when Men shall seek Death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and Death shall flee from them.*” For * “*who among us can dwell with the devouring Fire? who among us can dwell with everlasting Burnings?*”

There are a great many Passages of a similar Import in the sacred Writings, descriptive of the gloomy State of a Self-condemning Mind. Nor are any such Representations appropriated only to particular Times, or Persons, but extend throughout all Ages, and to all human Kind. Misery ever *was*, and ever *will be* the necessary and unavoidable Result of offending against the Light of Reason, and the Convictions of Conscience. Whenever we infringe upon These, we shall

shall feel the pernicious Consequences of such a Conduct, as surely, and as naturally, as Heat is produced by Fire, or an acute Pain by a Wound in the Body.

On the contrary; the Man of Virtue, who mortifies his Lusts, and with a Christian Fortitude conquers his Passions, enjoys the Gratifications of Sense in such a Degree, as makes them sit easy upon his Mind, his Body, and his Fortune. This is the Man of true Greatness. This is he, who, by the powerful Armory of Heaven, “ *the Shield of Faith, the Helmet of* “ *Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit,*” joined to a steady Resolution of his own, obtains the noblest Victory upon Earth,—the Conquest of HIMSELF. And this too is he, who enjoys as much more substantial Peace, Honor, and Pleasure, than others of a contrary Disposition, as he excels them in Innocence, Virtue, and

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Self-Denial. His Innocence is a Security
to his Peace, his Virtue defends his Ho-
nor, and from Self-Denial proceeds that
sweet Satisfaction, which all the forbidden
Joys of Life cannot give.—It is acknow-
ledged indeed that a Man of this Character
is an utter Stranger to many short-lived
delusive Pleasures, which the Voluptuary
indulges himself in. But then he pos-
sesses those of an infinitely superior Kind;
not dashed with a single Ingredient of that
bitter Compound of Evils, which are the
peculiar Potion of the sensual Man. He
foregoes, 'tis true, the Indulgence of some
irregular Inclinations, or inordinate Fol-
lies; such as he finds himself, from his
original Depravity, naturally prone to:
But then he comforts himself with mortifi-
fying those Affections, and bidding De-
fiance to those Temptations, which he
sees, in the Glass of Reason, would at
Length prove fatal and destructive. He

is

Ser. X.] *sensual Mortification.* 297

is conscious also that he supports the Dignity of a *rational*, and secures to himself the Friendship of a *Divine Being*. And is not such a Consciousness an ample Recompence for any trifling Mortifications of Sense? He is perhaps exposed to several Hardships arising from his Condition; or he sometimes endures the wanton Insults of the Proud and Empty, or the Ridicule of the fashionable Sinner. Thus may he very possibly be persecuted even for Righteousness Sake. But then, does he not enjoy the perpetual Sweets of a contented Mind?—a Mind all Harmony: the genuine Offspring of a clear Conscience; and, particularly the Hope of being eternally rewarded by Him, who said, * “*Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*”

* Mat. v. 10.

If therefore we truly value our present Peace, and are desirous of obtaining future and never-ending Happiness, let us resolve, my Brethren, to abstain from those Excesses, which are professed Enemies to both. If the Difficulty of resisting outward Temptations, and mortifying inward Lusts, is allowed to be great, let us, with Moses, "*have Respect unto the Recompence of that Reward,*" which is ten thousand Times greater.—Let us frequently entertain the pleasing Idea that the inexpressible Joys of another World will abundantly compensate for all the Hardships that we suffer in this: While the poor miserable Sensualist, who has his small Portion of Enjoyments with the Brutes here, must be condemned to eternal Punishment with evil Spirits hereafter.—In a Word; let us offer up our most humble and ardent Addresses to the Throne of Grace, that
all

Ser. X.] *sensual Mortification.* 299

all our past Sins may be forgiven thro' the Mercies of our adorable God in Christ Jesus; and that we may be blessed and sanctified with spiritual Comfort, Direction, and Assistance, throughout the whole Course of our future Lives.—So that when every sensual Indulgence, every gay Delusion, and every idle Dream of this Life is ended, we may be at last presented at the Tribunal of the great Judge without Spot or Blemish.

Now to God the Father, &c.

Amen.

S E R.

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all our past Sins may be forgiven thro'
the Mercies of our adorable God in
Christ Jesus; and that we may be blessed
and sanctified with spiritual Comfort,
Direction, and Assistance, throughout the
whole Course of our future Lives.—So
that when every sensual Indulgence,
every gay Delusion, and every idle
Dream of this Life is ended, we may be
at last presented at the Tribunal of the
great Judge without Spot or Blemish.

New to God the Father, &c.

Amen.

S E R.

S E R M O N XI.

The true Purport of an acceptable
Repentance with God.

PSALM xxxii. 6.

*I said, I will confess my Sins unto the Lord:
and so thou forgavest the Wickedness of
my Sin.*

S E R M O N . XI.

The true Purport of an acceptable
Repentance with God.



And, I will
and so the
my Son.

S E R M O N XI.

*The true Purport of an acceptable Repentance
with God.*

P S A L M XXXii. & 5.

I SAID, I WILL CONFESS MY SINS UNTO
THE LORD: AND SO THOU FORGAVEST
THE WICKEDNESS OF MY SIN.

SUCH is the humble and becoming
Language of the penitential Psalmist:
Such the genuine Confession of that re-
markable Sinner, but much more illu-
strious and distinguished Saint. Though
he had been guilty of the most atrocious
Crimes, even Murder and Adultery, yet
sovereign Mercy, which nothing but
Inflexibility can exhaust, is most gra-
ciously extended to him; and that same
divine Goodness, which leads him to
Repentance,

Repentance also seals his Pardon, as the natural Result of it. So hearty was his Sorrow and Contrition, and so exemplary the Deportment of his future Life, that he who was once so egregious a Transgressor, was yet eminently stiled, * “ *the Man after God’s own Heart.*”——The sacred History abounds with Examples of a similar Kind. As it both frequently and strongly recommends the Duty, so it leaves us no Room to doubt the Efficacy of a sincere Repentance. No sooner did the rich Publican in the Gospel, who was condemned by the Multitude as a noted Offender, resolve to make Restitution for the Injuries imputed to him, than he received that comfortable Assurance from the Mouth of our blessed Lord, † “ *This Day is Salvation come to this House.*” Saint Peter, whose Character was stigmatized with the basest and most cowardly

• Acts xiii. 22.

† Luke xix. 9.

cowardly Ingratitude, that of repeatedly, and with abominable Execrations, denying a bare Knowledge of his Lord and Master,—an Offence in itself remarkably notorious, and still heightened by an Abuse of that copious Measure of Grace, with which God had blessed him,—was yet so far from being cut off from Mercy, that upon his *bitter Weeping*, and penitential Remorse, we find him continued in the dignified Office of an Apostle.——

Though the Light of Grace, which sometimes in the very best of its Votaries appears dim and languid, was just then withdrawn, and he was permitted to flinch at that critical Period; yet he stood to the last one of the main Pillars of Christianity, and proved himself to be that strong *Rock*, upon which Christ was pleased to declare he would *build his Church*. Nay, Saint Paul himself——

But why should I accumulate particular

X

Instances?

Instances? Is not the Validity of this great Duty enforced in general and express Terms throughout the whole Book of God? * *“ Godly Sorrow worketh Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of,”* is the beautiful and consolatory Language of Scripture, and admits but of one clear and reasonable Construction. *“ Repent ye,”* is the first Exhortation of that leading Preacher of the Gospel, the glorious Harbinger of Christ. And our Lord himself also, whose great Business it was to *“ call Sinners to Repentance,”* begins his ministerial Function, (which he condescended to assume out of pure Regard to the immortal Interests of his People) in the same zealous and affectionate Manner; † *“ Repent : for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.”*

That we may properly understand the Words

• 2 Cor. vii. 10.

† Mat. iv. 17.

Words of the Text, I will endeavor to explain to you the full Purport of that Repentance which is implied therein, and to which the Promise of Forgiveness is annexed.—It is not to be doubted that holy David, when he made so full a Declaration of *confessing his Sins unto the Lord*, (the happy Consequence of which is Pardon and Remission) intended a sincere Heart-felt Repentance. The constituent and essential Parts of this indispensable Duty, we will therefore immediately examine.

The FIRST Step towards the Work of Regeneration (which in the Scripture Phrase is a synonymous Term with Repentance) is a deep and sorrowful Sensibility of our depraved State. Sin is that fatal Weapon, which wounds the Heart of every true Penitent. From this corrupted Spring proceed Remorse,
X 2 Horror,

Horror, and Reproach, with all the malignant Streams of Guilt. And when once the Sinner becomes truly sensible of all this; when that holy COMFORTER, who, as our Saviour declares, is to “*convince the World of Sin,*” holds the Mirror to his Breast, and enables him to see every Pollution there; discovers to him the Odiousness of his Ingratitude to God, and the imminent Danger his precious Soul is every Moment exposed to,—how does he detest and tremble at the Thoughts of his own Unworthiness!—Every Reflexion is a Dagger to his Mind. And hence arises that nameless Terror and Confusion, that indignant Grief and Sorrow, which none but the true Penitent can either feel or understand. An Affliction of this spiritual Kind, heavy and lingering as it is, in a comparative View with Eternity, is but light and transient: And it is certainly intended
to

to “work out for us a far more exceeding
“and eternal Weight of Glory.” If we
allow then that the Medicine to human
Nature is sharp and grievous, let us not
forget to consider, that the Cure which
is wrought by it is of the highest Moment
and Concern. The blessed and infalli-
ble Physician of Souls, tenderly admi-
nisters every bitter Ingredient for the
real Benefit of his Converts. And if we
~~dare~~ credit the Oracles of Inspiration,
without listening to what the *self-sufficient*
Moralist may chuse to advance to the
contrary, we must believe that every
true Conversion is effected not merely
by human, but divine Power. It is the
holy Spirit alone——(what great Reason
we have, my Brethren, fervently to im-
plore this all-sufficient Aid!) that gives
the Reprobate the first Insight into him-
self, shakes off his carnal Lethargy, and
awakens him into a full Sense of his im-

pending Ruin.——Being thus self-convicted and abashed, struck with inward Horror and Remorse, and just sprung from the dark Prospect of Sin and Misery, into the reviving Light of Gospel-Salvation, he proceeds with more Eagerness and Alacrity (still under the Conduct of his spiritual Guide) in this happy, penitential Course: And he produces to God and to the World, apparent Proofs of his being renewed and sanctified.

This Consideration naturally leads us to the SECOND general Point required in a sincere and acceptable Repentance with God: Which is an actual Reformation of Manners; and consists of two principal Parts, viz. a total Renunciation of Vice, and a regular and uniform Practice of Virtue.

The profligate and abandoned Sinner,
may

may very possibly be conscious that he is so, and be sorry for having destroyed his Health, Credit, or Fortune, in Riot, Luxury, and Licentiousness. But if he stops here,—if his Sorrow arises from the Loss of worldly Accommodations only, it is evident that the World still engrosses his Affections, and that no Regard is paid to that Being, his ungrateful Abuse of whose Mercy and Goodness ought to be conceived as the true Cause of all he suffers. Such a Sorrow as this, though we even suppose it to be accompanied with an Acknowledgment of his Folly, is a fruitless and hypocritical Sorrow: It will only prove an Aggravation of his Guilt, and end in a Sorrow of another Kind,—for it “*worketh Death.*”

But the Grief of the penitent Man arises from a superior Cause. His Tears flow from a different Spring. Yes, and

they are kept too in that Bottle of God the holy Psalmist speaks of, in Testimony of that blessed Repentance which can never be repented of. In *His* State of Sorrow and Debasement, his injured Maker and Benefactor is the capital Consideration. His full Heart bleeds at the Reflection of every Trespas committed against so gracious a Sovereign; a Sovereign who might have cut him off in the Depth of his Iniquity, and justly consigned him to everlasting Perdition.—— Riches, Pleasures, and temporal Grati- fications, are all Trifles now. He feels a Load of Guilt upon his Mind, that far outweighs every other Care. Remem- brance now shudders at each black Of- fence, and every darling Sin is be- come the most detestable Object of his Thoughts. Thus laboring under the Pangs of a self-condemning Conscience, he obeys its resistless Impulse, and is nobly

nobly bent to break off his strong Attachment to every wicked Practice. Honest Nature, combined with Reason, and both assisted by Grace, instruct him to fly the Serpent that has stung him, and left so much Pain behind. Fear, Hope, Love, Indignation, Zeal, and all the imperial Passions of the Soul, find Room to exert themselves on this important Occasion. They employ their united Aid in "*bringing forth Fruits meet for Repentance.*" They claim each their respective Part in assisting him to rectify the evil Dispositions of his Soul, and to conquer the Struggles of his corrupted Nature.— Habit,—even obstinate, inveterate Habit is subdued; and the Ridicule of his gay Confederates in Vice pitied and despised:—A painful Victory this! But such as will load him with unperishable Spoils. He is taught how to expostulate against the Importunity of his own restless Desires;

fires;

fires; how to curb the Force of those insatiable Gratifications, which are grown into the Constitution itself; and how to stand Proof against all *the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*:—Severe Discipline! But such as will crown him with everlasting Honor.

Yet the happily distressed Convert rests not here.—He cannot content himself with a bare Observance of *negative* Injunctions, but adheres with Chearfulness to all the *practical* Duties of a good Christian. True Piety begins now to raise her late declining Head, and to flourish throughout his whole Conduct. A regular Obedience to the holy Commands of God, which is the plain and undoubted Proof of true Religion, is become his principal Study. He can now cordially join the King of Israel in that pious Breathing,

Breathing, † “*Thy Testimonies are my Delight and my Counsellors.*” The Scale of Life is reversed; and Vices of the most atrocious Nature are converted into the most amiable Virtues. The former are buried in the Grave of everlasting Oblivion; for *they shall not so much as be mentioned unto him*; whilst the latter shall survive the Stroke of Mortality, and shine for ever in the most conspicuous Light. Animated with this Belief, he not only takes a resolute Leave of Vice in general, but every particular Sin is succeeded by its opposite Grace or Virtue. Luxury and Profuseness give Place to Temperance and Sobriety; narrow-hearted Avarice is extended into an open Liberality; Cruelty is softened into Compassion; Malice and Revenge are soothed into Peace and Harmony, and breathe out nothing but the tender Accents of Charity.

Charity and Benevolence; and especially are Pride and Arrogance humbled into that "*meek and quiet Spirit, which is in the Sight of God of great Price.*"—Does the World solicit him with its usual Inchantments, and make an Attack upon those Passions, (for they still remain) which it has been long accustomed to seduce? Does it tempt him with its intoxicating Pleasures?—He bids Defiance to the Siren: His Heart is now fixed on those *Rivers of Pleasure*, which flow in another Climate, even at *God's right Hand for ever and ever.* Does it allure him with its sordid, but bewitching Interests?—He is now awake out of his golden Dreams, and has no Interest in View, but *the unsearchable Riches of Christ.* Does it court his Attention with splendid Honors, and fantastic Poms?—Tinsel Toys! that he looks down upon with an Eye of Pity and Contempt: When set in Competition

Competition with those unfading Crowns of Glory, those pure, unchangeable, immortal Honors, which he believes are reserved for him in Heaven, they evaporate into nothing.

Thus is the once obdurate and implacable Sinner, whose Heart was steeled against all the Offers of Grace and Mercy, turned at last from a Course of the most egregious Folly, into that of the most exalted Wisdom,—“ *the Wisdom of the just.*” The gracious Whispers of that holy Spirit, who is unwilling that any should perish, are now duly listened to, his condescending Overtures embraced, and a new Set of Inclinations and Aversions ingrafted in the Heart.—He is actuated by so different a Principle, and there appears such an absolute Change of Manners throughout the whole Tenor of his Life, that he is elegantly called

called a *new Man*: according to that very expressive Figure in Scripture, he is "*born again*:" he is totally "*renewed*" "*in the Spirit of his Mind, and,*" by Virtue of the GREAT ATONEMENT for all repented-of Sin, "*become one of the Sons of God.*"

The true scriptural Meaning of the Word Repentance, confined to its own intrinsic Signification, has been thus fully explained. But the *Means* by which alone it will find Acceptance at the Throne of divine Mercy, is a Consideration which should never be omitted. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is that great Atonement for the Sins of the World, without which the most fervent Repentance would be quite ineffectual, and even the least of Sinners be irretrievably lost. He is that adorable † "*Mediator*" "*between*

† 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

*“ between God and Men, who gave himself
“ a Ransom for all.”* This is He, who
not only *came into the World*, but obeyed,
suffered, and died in it, with no other
View but *to save Sinners*. And after this
amazing Catastrophe, Justice released
him from the Prison of the Grave, and
he arose again triumphant from the
Dead. Then did he ascend the *coelestial*
Regions; where, seated at the right Hand
of the Almighty Judge, he pleads the
Cause of the sincere Penitent, and pro-
cures his everlasting Pardon.

Tho' Repentance then is a Duty indis-
pensibly incumbent upon every Sinner,
yet it is not that alone, or any Method
that we ourselves are able to prescribe,
that can purchase Reconciliation with
God: But it is available to Salvation
only thro' the inestimable Merits of our
Redeemer Jesus Christ. It is by a lively,
fixed,

fixed, and *operative Faith* in Him, that we are intitled to the Remission of our Sins, and all the Privileges of his own ever blessed Gospel. By Virtue of *this fundamental Grace*, we are grounded in the Love of God, and do enjoy that sweet Peace and Communion with him, which both infinitely surpass all the forbidden Pleasures, and also give the best Relish to every innocent Enjoyment of Life. Upon this Foundation is every pious Resolution formed, and put in Execution. Many and great are the Encomiums, deservedly bestowed on *this spiritual Endowment*, which we find scattered in various Places of holy Writ.— Only attend to the following Passages.—
 † “*Have Faith in God;*” for § “*without Faith it is impossible to please him:*”—
 * “*Believe in the Lord your God, so shall*
ye

† Mark xi. 22.

§ Heb. xi. 6.

* 2 Chron. xx. 20.

*“ ye be established; believe his Prophets, so
“ shall ye prosper :—† “ Believe on the
“ Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved :
—† “ For God so loved the World, that he
“ gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever
“ believeth in him should not perish, but have
“ everlasting Life.”*

The Nature of Repentance, as well as the Merits on which God has promised to accept it, I have thus endeavored to define. There are many strong and engaging Motives to induce us, without Delay, to embrace this essential Part of Christianity. But the Conclusion of a Discourse, cannot, with Propriety, afford Room to enlarge particularly and minutely upon them. Let it suffice to observe in general, that the Goodness of God on the one Hand, and his Severity on the other, are the most rational Incite-

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† Acts xvi. 31.

† John iii. 16.

ments to Repentance. “ *Behold therefore* (and love and tremble while ye behold) “ *the Goodness and Severity of God!*” On them that are incorrigible, *Severity*; but *Goodness* towards the penitent Man, if he *continues* in his Penitence; otherwise (if he relapses into his former Vices) he also shall perish for ever.

Love and Fear are perhaps the strongest Passions of our Nature. For this Reason doubtless the infallible Wisdom of God has made singular Application to these, with a View to have *His* Glory celebrated, and *our* Felicity established. Can our Love be excited by Promise of the most transcendent Happiness?—Hear that condescending Invitation of your Lord; —* “ *Come ye blessed of my Father, (ye faithful and ye penitent Children!) “ In-* “ *herit the Kingdom prepared for you from* “ *the*

* Mat. xxv. 34.

“ the Foundation of the World.” Can our Fears be alarmed with a Dread of the most exquisite Punishment?—Hark, how *“ he uttereth his mighty Voice in Thunder!—† “ Depart from me, ye cursed, (ye impenitent Rebels!) “ into everlasting Fire, “ prepared for the Devil and his Angels.”*

It is my sincere Wish, my Brethren; that this solemn Contrast may have that happy Impression both upon you and me, which our gracious Lord intended it for. May the tender Mercy, and the strict Justice of God, equally affect us! May they separately and distinctly engage our Love and Fear, and, when united, our faithful Obedience! the former guarding us from sinking into Despair, and the latter from rushing into Presumption. And may it especially be our Care to intreat the holy Spirit of

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God

God to enable us both to understand the Nature, and pursue the Practice, of a saving Repentance!—To this End let us also exhort one another to summon all our Strength and Reason to co-operate with the Divine Aid. And let us by all Means beware of entertaining that Self-Partiality, which is so very prevalent, and by which we are so liable to be deceived. Let us be cautiously impartial in the Opinion we form of our own Hearts. By the natural and pleasing Illusion of self-Flattery, I am afraid, numbers are eternally ruined. We are too apt to compliment our own Worth, and just look upon the Surface of our Actions. But the safe and prudent Method, is to be constantly suspicious of ourselves, and to probe our Hearts to the Bottom. They will then tell us what is necessary to be planted, or improved there, and what intirely to be rooted out. We shall then be able to distinguish between that true Repentance,

pentance, which is effectual to Salvation, and that bare Sorrow and Confession, which only plays about the Fancy, and is of no Account in the Sight of an omniscient God.

Lastly; I must not neglect to admonish you of the real Necessity there is of a *speedy* as well as sincere Repentance. Procrastination is a treacherous Thief; that would steal away all your Time. And it is highly worthy of your most serious Consideration, how precious that Time is: The short and uncertain Duration of this transitory Life, is a very cogent Persuasive to the immediate Performance of this difficult Task.—You believe, I am persuaded, and expect, that you shall find yourselves alive again in another State, when all the gay Scenes of this are lost to you for ever. You believe also, that you shall be everlastingly punished, or

rewarded, and that in a proportionable Degree, according to your Virtues or Vices here. And you are absolutely assured, that this great Change, which you and every Mortal must undergo, cannot be far distant. Is it then possible for you to continue in the Practice of any single Vice, when you pretend to believe at the same Time, that, if you die impenitent, your Wickedness against God will not only deprive you of the most substantial Happiness, but be productive of the extremest Misery, and that for ever and ever? When you consider that so weighty a Concern is *now* in Hand,—that the final Allotment of an immortal Soul is *just now* dependent,—and that you are totally uncertain, whether that Soul must not “ *this very Night be required of you,*”——will you, dare you “ *neglect so great Salvation?*” Dare you defer an hearty Repentance for any atrocious

troubling Crime that you have been guilty of, or any unguarded Step that you have taken one Moment longer?—Surely a Work of this Kind, both difficult and important, cannot be begun too soon.—It can admit of no Delay, consist with no Remissness.——“*To Day*” then, my beloved Brethren, “*if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts.*”——This very Day resolve, by God’s Grace, to renounce all your Iniquities, and to “*work out your Salvation,*” (He being your Helper) “*before that Night comes when none can work.*”——May God Almighty give a lasting Blessing to the Duties that have been now performed! May his merciful Goodness soften every hard Heart, and cause every stubborn Knee to bend! May he enable every one of us to understand, and consider in due Time, the true Value of that Part of us which must live for ever! And in Con-

928 *The true Purport, &c.* [Ser. XI.]

sequence hereof, to "*confess our Sins unto*
"*the Lord,*" with such Contrition and
Sincerity as may induce Him, thro' the
Merits of Christ Jesus, who died for the
Ungodly, to "*forgive the Wickedness of our*
"*Sin.*"

All this I pray God grant, for the Sake
of the same Jesus Christ his beloved Son,
our Lord:—To whom, with the Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, Glory, and
Praise, both now and for evermore.

Amen.

S E R.

S E R M O N XII.

A steady Trust in God the best Support under Affliction.

JOB xiii. 15.

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.



S E R M O N XII.

*A steady Trust in God the best Support
under Affliction.*

J O B xiii. 15.

THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I
TRUST IN HIM.

CAN any human Language express a more absolute Confidence in the Supreme Being, than the Words contained in this comprehensive Sentence? The Resolution, considered in itself, as supposing it to proceed from any common Mouth that professes a Belief in God, is noble and pathetic: But what here gives it a peculiar Dignity, is that uncommon Weight of Affliction, with which its truly pious and exemplary Author was oppressed.——What an astonishing

nishing Vicissitude of Fortune did he sustain! Being more signally exposed perhaps than any other Person in the World, either before or after him, to the two most dangerous and opposite Extremes, Prosperity and Adversity.——

How remarkably did he flourish in the Spring of Life! And with what singular Splendor was God pleased to adorn that early Period! For he “*was the greatest of all the Men in the East;*” enjoyed as much earthly Happiness as the Capacity of a mortal Creature would admit of; all that Health, Peace, and unbounded Possessions could conspire to bestow.

Nor was this distinguished Allotment of human Bliss confined within the little Circle of Self-Enjoyment, but extended to a numerous Progeny.——Grateful Reflection to an ingenuous Mind! to have the Power of communicating to others a

Part

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Part of that Happiness which it feels itself: and not only so, but to a Man's own Offspring; his own Flesh and Blood:—blessed too with the pleasing Prospect that those tender Pledges of his future Care, each of whom he esteems as a second Self, shall reap a competent Portion of all this Felicity, when he himself shall be no more.

Yet perhaps you will object, and (not without some Color of Reason) insist that Wealth and Grandeur are the common Coverings of a bad Heart; and that the Tempest of the Mind, (that worst of Storms) blown up by pampered Vice, beats hard within, when all appears gay and serene without.—Granted.—But this was not Job's Case. He was an Exception to this general Observation, and Proof against every soft Inchantment, to which his exalted State was so much exposed.

posed. For we learn from the sacred History, that * *“ he was a perfect and
“ upright Man, one that feared God, and
“ eschewed Evil.”*

Let us now invert the Prospect; and from beholding him in all his Glory, towering in the Meridian of Fame,—beloved, admired, revered, and—every Thing but adored,—let us look down upon him in the most abject and deplorable State that ever wretched Mortal was involved in.—From the highest Tide of Joy and Plenty, he was reduced to the lowest Ebb of Misery and extreme Want. He was at once divested of all the Comforts and Conveniences of Life.—Sudden Strokes are ever an high Aggravation of Distress.—Here it is exemplified in the strongest Light.—Family, Friends, and Fortune, were all lost
in

* Job i. 1.

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in one fatal Hour.—And yet, instead
of murmuring at the Dispensations of
Heaven, or *charging God foolishly*, he does
not only patiently submit to, but even
blesses the Hand that wounds him.—
Hear the solemn Language of his Heart,
breathed out in that fervent Exclamation,
* “ *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken*
“ *away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.*”
—And, after all, to complete this Scene
of Woe, as well as to render the Exam-
ple still more conspicuous, almighty Wis-
dom was pleased to deprive him of the
most precious Jewel that it had bestowed
upon him,—even Health of Body, after
his Peace of Mind had been so closely
besieged. That inestimable Gift of the
divine Bounty, and that sweet Relisher
of all human Bliss, now fled with every
other Comfort. For the Lord permitted
Satan to smite him † “ *with sore Boils,*
“ *from*

* Job i. 21.

† Job ii. 7.

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“ *from*

* Job i. 21.

† Job ii. 7.

"from the Sole of his Foot unto his Crown."

———What is Man, O God, when thou thus hurlest the Thunderbolts of thy Fury upon him, or withholdest thy gracious Arm from sustaining him?———A Shadow.—a Vapor.—And yet a well-grounded Trust in Thee, will blunt the Edge of the most pungent Calamities, and soften all his Pains. Such was Job's happy,—I had almost said, divine Disposition. So strong was his own Resolution, and so unshaken his Confidence in thy Mercy, that the malignant Power of all his Sufferings united, could not force him to let go his Hold: But in manly Defiance to them all, he thus declares his steady and persevering Faith in Words which cannot be too much admired;——*"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."*

That a fixed and unalterable Trust in
the

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the Supreme Being, is the best and surest Support under all Afflictions, either of Mind or Body, is a Reflexion which the Text naturally suggests to us, and will furnish us with several useful Arguments:

But what this sacred Trust implies, and when it is that we entertain proper and worthy Notions of it, it first concerns us to enquire.—To trust in God is to fix an invariable Dependence (in all Stations, and in all Exigencies of Life) on that glorious Being who alone from the Beginning inhabiteth Eternity. It is to rely on HIM, and on Him only, before whose *Power* all Strength is Weakness, human and divine; whose *Wisdom* penetrates into the utmost Consequence of Things; and whose *Goodness* imparts real 342-364 Felicity under the Disguise of his bitterest Dispensations. How forcibly does each of these amiable Attributes engage

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our Obligation to a sincere Trust in that adorable Godhead to whom they belong! The *first* manifestly implies an Ability, the *second* a Knowledge, and the *third* a Will, to treat us in such a Manner as he knows is best for us,—to make all Circumstances, be they ever so difficult, ever so oppressive, conspire for our infinite and eternal Good.

A scriptural Trust in God further implies an absolute Prohibition of all vain Confidence in ourselves. * “*I will not trust in my Bow: it is not my Sword that shall help me,*” is a Declaration which should be metaphorically extended to every necessitous Condition of Life. No Acquisitions, or Accomplishments, of what Kind or Degree soever, must be allowed the least Share in the Honor of a divine Trust. All human Aid (though doubtless

* Psa. xliv. 7.

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doubtless often advantageously instrumental in the Hand of Providence) must be excluded from this Claim. Riches, Learning, Skill are mere Cyphers.— They are broken Reeds to lean upon, and, when set in Competition with the blessed Author of all Perfection, evaporate like the dissolving Smoke. The Application of our Abilities indeed (impotent as they are) in every laudable Employment, is a Tribute we owe to Heaven: and it would very ill become rational Creatures, formed for Action, continually dependent on their Creator, and to whom they are indebted for every Blessing they enjoy, to neglect the Improvement of those Talents of which they are possessed: But still we must confide in God alone for Success on our most earnest Endeavors. For tho' *Paul* himself should plant, and *Apollos* water, it is HE only who can give the Increase.

Unless our Labors are impregnated by His auspicious Influence, and enriched from the inexhaustible Fountain of all Good, they will be altogether fruitless and unprofitable. But if the propitious Beams of Providence smile upon us, what Storm can blast? if Omnipotence pleases to accelerate, who can retard the Accomplishment of our Wishes or Designs? The most worthless Trifle, a Leaf, a Feather, when God gives the Commission, shall become a golden Arrow in his Quiver, which nothing can obstruct. And when He says to the most inveterate Dislemper, "It is enough," its Rage shall abate, and its Virulence shall cease, after it has baffled all the Power of Medicine, and mocked the Physician's Art.—O trust in the Lord then, ye Sons of Affliction! and not in any earthly Expedient; and He will deliver you out of all your Troubles: Trust in the Lord, ye Learned!

and

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and lean not to your own Understanding: Trust in the Lord, ye Mighty! and rely not on your own Power: For with the Lord alone inhabits true Wisdom, and with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength.

In Sum; it is our Duty to trust in God, and in no other Power, both for all temporal and spiritual Blessings. It is the same gracious and adorable Being, who gives Health, Peace, Prosperity, and every earthly Comfort to our Bodies, and also imparts Faith, Hope, Charity, and all other Christian Graces to our Souls.—That we are frail, dependent Creatures, and utterly insufficient of ourselves to obtain the least of these rich Endowments, is a Confession almost as general as it is true. Is it not then a natural Inference, that, in every needful Emergency, we should make our humble

Application to our only true Friend, and universal Benefactor? and especially, since we are assured that almighty, unchangeable, omnipresent *Goodness* (this amiable Characteristic, which gives a Lustre to all the other Attributes of the Deity) is ever ready to soothe our Distresses, and supply our Wants. And does it not entirely correspond with the fallen, imperfect State of weak Mortals, to trust in the all-perfect God for Blessings of a superior Kind?—for spiritual Grace, Direction, and Assistance?—for Pardon of Sin, and Peace of Conscience?—for Reconciliation by Jesus Christ, and Sanctification by the holy Spirit?—for all that is truly valuable in this World, or will be proved to be so in the next? Such a Trust as this fully corresponds with the Attributes of the Creator, and is also perfectly adapted to the Condition of the Creature: It tends at once to display the
Glory

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Glory of divine Majesty, and to make tolerable the Miseries of Mankind: It is ever accompanied with that blessed Peace of God, which (as a learned Writer finely observes) “ is that Sense of being in
“ Friendship with him, that Feeling of
“ Comfort and Joy flowing from him,
“ which passeth all Understanding; exceeds the Conception of those who
“ have *not* experienced it, and will exceed hereafter the present Conceptions
“ of those who *have*.”

Having thus endeavored to convey to you an Idea of that Trust in the Lord, which will never fail of being accepted by him, it cannot now be difficult to comprehend how such a Confidence will comfort us in all the Distresses, and support us under all the Afflictions that are incident to human Nature.

And this it will not fail of doing in a Manner unexceptionably superior to every other Expedient: far beyond all that I can possibly represent, or you, without an happy Experience, be ever able to conceive. Where can we find more true and solid Comfort, where a more rational and exalted Satisfaction, than in frequent Communion with the blessed God, and a sure, tho' humble Trust in his Mercy? What can be more pleasing to Him, or more truly beneficial to ourselves, than to depend on his Grace and Goodness in all the several Calamities of Life?—Is there any Difficulty too hard for this uncontrollable Power to conquer? Any real Benefit that this compassionate Father is not willing to effect for his beloved Children? Should the Storms of Adversity threaten us from every Quarter, and our Sufferings be heavier than we know how to sustain, cannot

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cannot that same glorious God who ruleth the Thunder, also dissipate the gloomy Clouds of Affliction, and alleviate the Burthen of Distress? Cannot this merciful, this mighty Being, both relieve us in our Pains, and supply us in our Necessities? Yes, should Sickness and Poverty unite their Force, and with their galling Load of Miseries almost grind us to Powder, yet, if we wait patiently on the Lord, and humbly confide in his Mercy, He will be our certain Comfort, as well as Hope, a very present Help in Trouble: Afflictions, in the spiritual Meaning, shall not consume, but brighten and refine us; they shall not exhaust, but increase our Strength: Hardships shall even serve to animate, and the severest Trials administer new Vigor.

How deservedly may They be called happy, (if any Condition here will admit
of

of the Apellation) who are possessed of this heavenly Trust! They know assuredly, and maintain an habitual Sense of it, that Afflictions proceed from that Being, who is their faithful Friend, and tender Father; that they are all Messengers from Him, and therefore sent undoubtedly on some gracious Errand.— This, I think, is the capital Argument for Equanimity in Sufferings, and a calm Acquiescence in the divine Pleasure.— If it is He who formed the Light, and created Darkness, who first brought us into Existence, and hath ever since led and supported us thro' every Stage of it, who hath imparted to us Blessings innumerable, and *crowned* us daily with his *Mercy and loving Kindness*.—If it is the same Lord who *doth all these Things*, that now pleases to assign us this Pain, or this Trouble,—assign it too (as he certainly does) for our everlasting Benefit,—surely
we

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we have the highest Reason not only to bow with Patience to the all-wise Appointment, but even to rejoice in every State of Affliction, and adore the Hand that smites us.

It is a Consideration which deserves our especial Regard, that whatever is the Affignation of unerring Wisdom (tho' we cannot always discern its Propriety) *must* be right; whatever Almighty Love ordains (however grievous to human Nature) *must* be good.—A firm Foundation this, against all Attacks, for the afflicted Soul to rest upon! A most solid Basis on which to build it's Confidence! It was this that supported *Eli, David, Job*, and ten thousand others.—The Man who trusts in God, and believes that every painful Visitation has a Commission from his heavenly Father, who corrects him with all the Severity of
Kindness,

Kindness, and with an Intention to do him Good at the last, is fortified against all Storms; he is "*chastened, but not killed; sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing.*" Should his Cup of Life be deeply mingled with the bitterest Gall, sensible of the Spring from whence it flows, he drinks it with Thankfulness and Composure. All temporal Afflictions he receives as so many spiritual Blessings in Disguise. He considers himself as a poor unworthy Mortal, reflects how often, and how ungratefully, he has sinned against his Maker and Redeemer, and confesses that his repeated Crimes deserve heavier Punishment. Conscious of the great Danger that is peculiar to a continued Series of Health, and that accompanies the smiling Hours of an uninterrupted Prosperity, how apt these sublunary Enjoyments are to make us enamoured with our present State, and forget that we are Candidates
for

for Eternity, he the more chearfully acquiesces in his distressed Situation. His Miseries are sanctified, by the Blessing of the Holy Ghost, to his unspeakable Comfort. They tend to renew his carnal Mind, to break off his Attachment to the sordid Delights of this vain, delusive World, and, which is a Consideration above all others, to fix his Affections on that Country, where * “*God shall wipe away all Tears from his Eyes;*” from whence all Pain and Sorrow are for ever banished; and where nothing subsists but unmingled and immortal Joy.

Far different is the Condition of that Mortal, who † “*trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm, and whose Heart departeth from the Lord.*” Fear, Doubt, and Disquietude, in every Situation, are his constant and undivided Companions.

Does

* Rev. xxi. 4.

† Jer. xvii. 5.

Does he feed his sanguine Hopes with the Accomplishment of any particular Design? Or does some favorite Project engage his Pursuit?—How vain does ~~he~~ prove to be all human Help, exclusive of divine! How frail and treacherous the strongest Powers of his Dependence! One wants Ability, another an Inclination to serve him: And a Third, the very Man perhaps in whom he trusted, the Friend in whom his sole Assurance, his Heart is wrapt up,—flinches at a Crisis when he should stand the firmest, and basely betrays the Confidence reposed in him.—But to form a lasting Idea of such a State; only draw the Curtain of *Disease*, and observe the Deportment of a Wretch of this unhappy Stamp in his *latest* Moments.—What a Scene of Horror here presents itself!—An afflicted Body, and a tormented Mind!—Destitute of Relief, Comfort, Hope.—Now
every

every Prop fails him; and he experiences, to his inexpressible Sorrow, the Folly, the Madness of depending on any Thing mortal.—His beloved Wealth, Pomp, and Authority lose their Influence. They have no Succor to bestow: are utterly unable to sooth his Pains, or afford him one Moment's Ease: That blessed God, whose Friendship it would have been his main Interest to secure, and who alone could help him in this extreme Necessity, is his Enemy and Avenger. Even that gracious Being, who is Mercy itself, can shew him no Mercy;—for He hath not been applied to,—He hath not been trusted in.—Happy would it be for him, might his Woes terminate with that Life which will soon be no more. But alas! This, miserable as it is, must only expire to introduce him into another, which will be infinitely more so.—Then will that
dreadful

dreadful Time be accomplished, when he shall wish,—but wish in vain,—for “the Mountains to fall on him, and the “Rocks to cover him from the Presence “of the Lord, and from the Wrath of “the Lamb.”—Such will be the Condition of every one who takes not God for his Hope and Trust, but foolishly relies on secondary Causes for his Protection and Support.

From this Comparison, and the Reflections preceding it, there ariseth a single Inference of the highest Moment: Which is, that if we hope to experience the Comforts of that holy Confidence, which is here delineated, we must resolve, by Grace, to lead HOLY LIVES. To pretend to trust in God, without the Practice of Godliness, is absurd and hypocritical. This is a Truth which you may infallibly depend upon, that, as a sincere Trust
in

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in the Mercies of our Almighty Father, thro' Christ, is the Foundation of all true Peace and Comfort, so the Sanctity of our Hearts, and a regular Adherence to his sacred Laws, is the only solid Foundation of that Trust.

Do then, my Brethren, let us ever make it our principal Study, as it should certainly be our greatest Concern, "to walk humbly with our God;" to recommend ourselves to his Protection by a settled Habit of Piety and Virtue.—Let us resolutely mortify every evil Custom, repent without Delay of every Sin that we have been guilty of, and pray earnestly for Pardon thro' the Merits and Mediation of Christ.—Let us implore the *Holy Spirit* to fix these good Resolutions in our Hearts, and then, whatever Difficulties we are involved in, or whatever Miseries we labor under, we may trust without

Prefumption in our most merciful God. Armed with *such* a Shield, we shall be afraid of no Dangers, repine under no Afflictions, sink under no Adversities.— But instead of shewing Marks of Discontent, or betraying a pusillanimous Temper, we shall be enabled to cry out with David, in that interrogatory Self-Reproof,
 * “ *Why art thou so vexed, O my Soul: and*
 “ *why art thou so disquieted within me? O*
 “ *put thy Trust in God: for I will yet thank*
 “ *him, who is the Help of my Countenance,*
 “ *and my God.*” And again, † “ *Cast thy*
 “ *Burthen upon the Lord, and he shall*
 “ *sustain thee.*” And here, with Job in the Text, “ *Though he slay me, yet will I*
 “ *trust in him.*”

God grant that you and I may be blest with such a Trust as this; and with all the Comforts, temporal and spiritual, proceeding

‡ Psa. xlii. 14, 15.

† Psa. lv. 22.

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ceeding from it! May it attend and support us in every Trial of Life,—through all the various Scenes and Changes of it! May it make us calm and resigned upon the Bed of Sickness,—at that Time of real Need! And may it at last draw out the Sting of Death, and remove us, thro' God's most precious Mercies in Christ Jesus, from this Land of Wickedness and Trouble, to an holy and blessed Immortality!

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.

Amen.

S E R.

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ceasing from it! May it stand and sup-
port us in every Trial of Life,--through
all the various Scenes and Changes of it!
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Trouble, to an holy and blessed im-
mortality!

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy
Ghost, &c.

Amen.

S E R

S E R M O N X I I I .
O N
C O N T E N T M E N T .

H E B . x i i i . 5 .

*Be content with such Things as ye have: for
He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor
forsake thee.*

09-03-1978

2 E R M O N

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES



The content with such things as we have: for
 the sake of it, I will never let it go, nor
 forget it.

S E R M O N XIII.

On CONTENTMENT.

H E B. xiii. 5.

BE CONTENT WITH SUCH THINGS AS
YE HAVE: FOR HE HATH SAID, I WILL
NEVER LEAVE THEE, NOR FORSAKE
THEE.

PEACE and Contentment in the pre-
sent World, and immortal Happiness
in that which is to come, are the grand
Objects of every wise Man's Care. They
comprehend all that is attainable, or
even to be wished for, both in *Time* and
in *Eternity*. For, in whatever Rank or
Degree we stand; whether the external
Circumstances of Fortune smile or frown
upon us; to be *content* is to be *happy*.—

And to enjoy a pure and rational Happiness, tho' imperfectly, here, is doubtless an Earnest of enjoying it in its full Perfection hereafter.

But the various Opinions which are formed of Contentment, and the different Tracks in which it is blindly pursued, surprizingly betray the Capriciousness and Inconsistency of Man.—*Ambition* pants after it in the popular Breath; *Avarice* digs for it in the Mines of Mammon; and *Libertinism* dreams of its being confined to the Brothel.—Airy Notions these! and the spontaneous Product of a chimerical Brain!—They never experimentally afforded one Moment's calm and solid Enjoyment.—Fancy may create Images of Bliss, and entertain us with every Phantom that we chuse fondly to admire; but when we think to take Possession of the Syren, it eludes our eager Grasp,

Grasp, and leaves us in all the Anguish of Disappointment and Self-Reproof.—

The Engagement of our Affections to Objects by no Means worthy of them, our rating those Objects beyond their Desert, and a vain Expectation of receiving more from them than they either are, or ever can be, capable of bestowing, are the manifest Causes of a too general Discontent.—When we recollect that *God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness*, we may well suppose ourselves designed for a more exalted Purpose than barely to gratify our Senses, or pursue the Vanities of Life. And if so, it is certain that outward Circumstances, whatever they consist in, can never constitute a rational Happiness.—The *good Things* of the World (erroneously so called) have the Power to pall, but not truly satisfy the Capacities of intelligent Beings. They only

only play about the sensitive Faculties, but cannot fill the large Ideas of an immortal Spirit.

Yet, if we attend duly to the Advice given us in the Words of the Text, we shall find that it is not so difficult a Task to obtain Contentment as is generally supposed. It is a Jewel, which, tho' of inestimable Worth, does not require any uncommon Pains to purchase.—Only learn to *be content with such Things as YE HAVE.*—A very plain and easy Lesson! Here are no Hardships, Dangers, or Distresses insisted on. All Anxiety for future Events is excluded. And we are wisely admonished to be satisfied with our present Lot. But since human Nature is weak, and unassisted Reason not always strong enough to acquiesce, the Apostle encourages every Christian Believer to be content with his Appointment

ment from a Consideration of God's own Promise, in that *he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*—A most gracious, comfortable, and encouraging Assurance! And tho' it was originally directed to,* *Joshua*, the Successor of *Moses*, and faithful Servant of the Lord, it extends to all Persons, of every Sect and Nation, who trust in God, and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This Subject then evidently obliges me to expatiate on the great Duty of CONTENTMENT under all the various Circumstances of Life.

When our blessed Creator had completed this material System, he beheld all his Works with an approving Eye. For all was perfect Harmony: Not the least *Erratum* discoverable in the grand
and

* See *Joshua* i. 5.

and stupendous Structure. The same adorable Godhead is likewise the Director and Preserver of universal Nature.—His vital Energy, though impenetrable to human Sight, pervades, actuates, and supports the whole Creation. We see clearly the Marks of his superintending Providence, tho' we are not able to scrutinize into his secret Operations. What evident Demonstrations are we hourly blessed with of his unequalled and uncontrollable Power, his absolute and irreprovable Wisdom, and particularly his **GOODNESS**, which is unlimited and inexhaustible! These amiable Attributes are the Basis of all our Hopes. Hence we form the pleasing Idea of God's universal Government; and cannot therefore doubt the Propriety of his Administrations. He * “ *is the blessed and only* “ *Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord* “ *of*

337

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* 1 Tim. vi. 15.

“ of Lords :” He is † “ the only wise God :”
And ‡ “ his Goodness endureth continually.”

THIS is that wonderful Being, (in whom all Perfection centers) who “ chooses our
“ Inheritance, and fixes the Bounds of
“ our Habitation.” This is He, who appropriates to every Man, in every Period of his Life, his distinct Situation.
* “ The Lot is cast into the Lap ;” says the wise Son of David, “ but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” Tho’ this great Variety of Conditions seems to Us to proceed barely from fortuitous Circumstances, yet they are all directed by infinite Discernment, and slated according to the Counsels of eternal Wisdom. What we blindly term *Chance*, is really an Agent appointed to execute the *divine Decrees*. Every Alteration that we see daily happening, whether by Honor or Abasement,

† Tim. i. 17.

‡ Psa. lii. 1.

* Prov. xvi. 33.

Abasement, Health or Sickness, Life or Death, is by no Means to be imputed to *Casualty*, but *Providence*;—Providence, executing its own deliberate Purposes, tho' not always discovering its Interposition to the Eyes of Men.—And can we then profess to believe that the World and every Creature in it is under God's immediate Care and Circumspection; that He is “ Lord of both Heaven and Earth;” and has therefore an unquestionable Right to dispose of his Property as he pleases;—and yet murmur at our Allotment, and say, “ Why hast thou made me thus, or fixed me here?” Shall we acknowledge ourselves to be weak, imperfect, dependent Beings, and yet presume to arraign our Maker's Government, or be dissatisfied with his sacred Dispensations?—Much rather does it become us to bow with the most humble Resignation, and determine, by God's
Grace,

Grace, whatsoever Portion He shall please to assign us, "*therewith to be content.*"

To acquiesce in the Midst of *Plenty*, and to be content in a *flourishing* Condition, appears to be no difficult Task.— Nor can we properly deem Contentment, in such agreeable Circumstances, to be in itself any considerable Virtue. When all nature smiles around us, and Prosperity gilds every Scene with Joy; so long as the Body continues free from Disease, and the Heart unwounded by Sorrow; we must have way-ward Dispositions indeed, if we are either deficient in Gratitude to God, or harbor any unjustifiable Complaints in our own Breasts. How base must be the Mind that is dissatisfied within, when all is chearful and serene without! How much baser still does it appear, and how unworthy of those valuable Gifts bestowed upon it,

it, when even the common Tribute of Thanksgiving to the Donor is neglected, or despised! And, if I may pursue so unnatural a Climax, how yet more vile and detestable is it to convert those very Blessings which call so loudly for the utmost Returns of Praise, Gratitude, and Adoration, into the Means of dishonoring their gracious Author!—And yet in Fact, this is no uncommon Case.—Only look into the World;—and see what Numbers there are of superior Rank, “*cloathed in Purple and fine Linen, and*” “*faring sumptuously every Day,*” that are ever murmuring and discontented; ungoverned by Grace; and Slaves to their predominant Passions. “I am here situated, may the prosperous *Worldling* say, “in a terrestrial Paradise: But there “grows in the Midst of the Garden, an “interdicted Tree, the Fruit of which “seems fair and delicious; inviting to
the

“ the Eye, and grateful to the Fancy :
“ How it mocks my Reach !—Ah ! why
“ has the Almighty prohibited the En-
“ joyment of this single Tree ? To taste
“ *here* is the very Summit of my Wishes.
“ Without it I must still be miserable :
“ And yet, it is the only Addition, that
“ is wanting to compleat my Happiness.”
With Regard to such ungrateful Wretches,
I shall only observe, that they deserve to
be tortured with that Anxiety which is
created by their own evil Tempers ; and
which Death itself cannot annihilate, un-
less first removed by a sincere Sorrow,
and Renovation of Mind.

But in order to arrive at the proper
Force of this Subject, let us more parti-
cularly consider the Duty which I am
recommending in the *opposite* State.—

When the Clouds of Adversity hang
“ hovering upon us, and throw a dismal
Gloom

Gloom over our most delightful Prospects; when the Arrows of Calamity stick deep in the Heart that was once chearful and felt no Pain; then it is that the Fortitude of the Mind is best proved, and this most desirable Virtue, Contentment, shines with redoubled Lustre.

Since Trouble is confessedly the certain Lot of human Nature, one might reasonable hope that every prudent Man would calmly accept the Inheritance to which he is born. In the School of Affliction it is especially incumbent upon us to study the valuable Lessons of Patience, Resignation, and Content.—And yet the poor desponding Mortal, who sits mournfully drooping under the Severity of his Fate, is ready to exclaim against the partial Dealings of Providence, on comparing his own Situation with that of others, which appears so infinitely

finitely more eligible. He thinks he sees thousands happier than himself, but none more wretched.—“ How many of my
“ Fellow-Creatures, says he, do I behold dancing away their golden Hours
“ in Joy and Festivity; crowned with
“ Affluence and Honor; and blessed
“ with all the Happiness that Health,
“ Riches, and a gay enchanting World
“ can give!—Whilst I, alas! am doomed
“ to Poverty and Labor; unacquainted
“ with the true Joys of Life; and
“ brought into the World only to prove
“ its Miseries.”—Thus does Envy and Complaint alternately employ every vacant Hour; and he laments over his own melancholy State, “ *as over the Grave of*
“ *deceased Hope.*” But surely a little serious Reflection must convince us that this is not only acting an imprudent, but a very ungrateful Part:—*Imprudent*, because Murmuring and Discontent cannot

possibly make his Condition better; and *ungrateful* because it *might* be ten thousand Times worse.

We have here a weak, corrupted, sinful Creature, disputing with his almighty Creator, about the Portion he vainly fancies himself intitled to in the Distributions of his Providence.—Let us behold the Example with an indignant Eye. And whenever we suspect that we are in Danger of running upon the same Rock, let us check ourselves in the destructive Course, by reflecting in general—that our present State, whether seemingly desirable or not, is assigned by an over-ruling Power;—that this same Power has an undoubted and unexceptionable Right to the Disposal of his Creatures;—that He is the best, and alone infallible Judge of every Circumstance that may be beneficial, or injurious to
us;

us;—and finally, that, upon Condition of our Faith, Repentance, and earnest Endeavors of Obedience to his Will, He will make all Occurrences conspire for our essential Interest.—For * “*all Things work together for good to them that love God.*” And † “*they who seek the Lord, shall want no Manner of Thing that is good.*” i. e. actually and intrinsically Good; And, however humble and unenvied their Condition may be, there shall nothing be wanting to promote their truest and most substantial Happiness.

Our Reflections on this Occasion would be also advantageously employed by examining a little into the real State of our Superiors. When we behold those Favorites of Fortune surrounded with Honors, and revelling in Wealth and
B b 3 Luxury,

* Rom. viii. 28.

† Psa. xxxiv. 10.

Luxury, how natural is it, at first Sight, to pronounce them happy; to envy and applaud their Power and Superiority! But do we consider, at the same Time, the numerous Cares and Anxieties they are exposed to, and which often rend their distracted Breasts?—We see them shining in all the Pageantry of Greatness, and admire their Pomp and Figure:—But is not the Eye dazzled with a false Glitter, and Admiration cheated with an empty Shew?—'Tis true, all is splendid and gay *without*; but is it not dark and comfortless *within*?—The *Countenance* indeed is chearful; but is not the *Heart* sad?—And what can Riches or sounding Titles profit in the Day of Calamity? Can they meliorate an evil Habit of Body, or guard the Avenues of a distempered Mind? Can they mitigate an acute Pain, or banish a settled Sorrow? Instead of this, are they not frequently the fundamental

damental Causes of both? Luxury and Licentiousness, which are the natural Offspring of Riches, create the one, and disappointed Pride and Ambition, which are the common Attendants of the Great, the other.—And is *this* the State which is so much envied, idolized, and passionately desired?—Let the Dignity of human Reason blush to hear it.—And whenever we labor under oppressive Circumstances, let us endeavor to conduct ourselves both like rational Men and good Christians. And let us, by God's Help, (on comparing our own Condition with that which I have been just remarking) resolve to embrace the Apostle's Advice, and *be content with such Things as we have.*

It will yet add to the Means of securing to ourselves this divine Virtue, if we turn our Ideas to the *inferior* Class of

human Beings: those to whom the all-wise Governor hath decreed a Situation more miserable than our own.—Go, thou peevish and repining Mortal, and visit the dismal Abode of forsaken Wretchedness. Go to the Habitation of Him who was once numbered among the Sons of Prosperity, whose every Day was an unclouded Sunshine, and whose Glories are now faded by one continued Winter of Misfortunes: Behold him emaciated with Poverty, and languishing in Sickness;—without a Friend to assist him in his deepest Sufferings, or drop a Tear of Pity.—Go to the Dwellings of the Fatherless, and see them left without the Guide of their Youth, the best Prop, under Heaven, of their tender and unpractised Age.—Behold them driven naked into a World that abounds with Cruelty, Snares, and wicked Suggestions.—See them exposed to all its various Attacks,

Attacks, without any visible Defence:—without a Parent, Benefactor, or Instructor.—Go into the rueful Cottage of some disconsolate Widow, whose sincere Grief shuns the Inspection of the public Eye.—See her bathed in Tears,—lamenting over the little innocent Offspring, which she knows not how to relieve.—Hear her giving Vent to the Fullness of a bleeding Heart, in all the inimitable Eloquence of Grief,—Grief for the Loss of her only Guardian, and *dearer Self*, who is just gone to return no more;—a Loss inexpressibly aggravated, by recollecting Months and Years, spent in mutually pleasing Society, and the most refined Friendship.—Go, search amidst the common Wrecks of human Happiness; balance them with an impartial Hand against thy own Sufferings; and then say whether Heaven, in this comparative Light, has not dealt graciously with

with thee? Consider,—had *such* a Condition,—had *This*,—or even *That*, been thy Allotment, how far more wretched thou must have been! And if the Weight of thy Afflictions seems *now* so heavy, how insupportable would it have been *then*!—Consider this; and, instead of murmuring and complaining, rejoice in and adore the Mercy of God: Adore that beneficent Being, who tho' He has diversified thy Life with Disappointments, Pains, and Sorrows, has yet afforded thee many Comforts and Alleviations, which are denied to Millions of thy own Species. Rest not only satisfied and content with thy present Portion, but render chearful Praises and Thanksgivings to the great Disposer of all Ranks and Conditions; to Him whose * “*Covenant is with Day and Night, and who hath appointed the Ordinances of Heaven and Earth.*”

But

* Jer. xxxiii. 25.

But let us now reckon ourselves in the Number of those who are placed in the very *lowest* Lot of Life. Let it be supposed that we are some of the greatest Instances of Distress that ever existed. Every Scene is dark, and Misfortunes in so quick a Succession croud in upon us, that they form one continued Series of Trouble. The pungent Weapons of Calamity are perpetually flying about us, and Affliction hath exhausted all her Rage.—Here, it must be acknowledged, in a Situation so peculiarly wretched, that our excellent Author's Admonition in the Text, appears difficult to be complied with. The Remedy prescribed, instead of alleviating, seems to add Weight to the Disease. It mocks all human Philosophy. But let us, in so desperate a Case, consider *who* it is that lays this grievous Burthen upon us: *What Power* is it that oppresses us with all this Misery?

sery?—Is it not the blessed Hand of Heaven that administers each bitter Portion, and directs the Rod that makes us smart so severely? Is not every Lash that we receive, inflicted by the Order of Omnipotence, the supreme Governor in Heaven and Earth, who doth in both whatsoever he pleases?—† “*Who maketh fore, and bindeth up; woundeth, and his Hands make whole.*” Is it not then our Duty to suppress the vain Murmur, and check the unprofitable Complaint?—Since whatever we suffer proceeds from an all-wise Judge, who cannot possibly betray the least Error in any of his Dispensations, we ought surely to bend our Minds into a chearful Composure, and, with the most unfeigned Resignation, adore the Hand that smites us.

If the Time would permit, I might endeavor

† Job. v. 18.

endeavor to prevail upon you to sit down contented with your present Appointment, and engage your Reconciliation even to the worst of Hardships, from the following weighty Considerations, viz. that there is not a State upon Earth so miserable, which God cannot make infinitely more so, both by adding to its Sorrows, and deducting from its Comforts;—that tho' our Sufferings are never so galling, never so numerous, yet our Sins and Transgressions deserve them all;—why then † “*doth a living Man*” “*complain, a Man for the Punishment of*” “*his Sins?*”—and lastly, that our Punishment is nothing more than the ordinary Effects of God's paternal Love and Tenderness; designed to convince us how frail we are, to wean our Affections from this *Valley of Tears*, and train us up for a more joyful Futurity.

But

† Lam. iii. 39.

363 But it is sufficient to observe, at once, that God, who defendeth the Cause of the helpless, even the most mighty and everlasting God, whose Promise is irrefragable, and whose Word is Truth itself, *hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* This is a Declaration which may well revive our drooping Spirits, and bear us up under the heaviest Incumbrances of Mortality. If we can engage the Favor of this merciful Being, we may defy all the Powers of Adversity, and smile at the most malicious Frowns of Fortune. God is not more a *Respector* of the *Conditions*, than the *Persons* of Men.—Whatever Rank we are appointed to keep, He will be our impenetrable Shield, and guard us against all the Daggers of Discontent. Our better Part, the Mind, which nothing but Vice can injure, shall stand Proof against every Storm; and the Body, tho' perhaps not
always

always sheltered, shall be at least supported.

I would now request your particular Attention to the conclusive Part of what has been advanced in general.

If, my Brethren, we wish ever to enjoy this excellent Gift of Heaven, true CONTENTMENT, we must lay the Foundation of it in our own Breasts. And we must not build with any Materials that a fickle World can either furnish us with, or deprive us of. Peace and Quiet are Pearls of too great a Value to venture on the same Bottom with a *pretty* Estate, an *empty* Title, or any of the *precarious* Pleasures of Life. For they all stand on a tottering Basis, which is in constant Danger of being demolished. But our Contentment will be then immoveable, when it is founded upon the Principles
of

of true Religion;—upon *Faith, Grace,* and *Hope*. These are the Rocks which no Tempest can shake, no Treachery undermine.—If we *believe in God, and believe also in Christ*; if we pray earnestly for Grace to restrain us from all Vice, and assist us in every good Work; and if we humbly hope for the Pardon of all our past Offences, (thro' the Merits of our Saviour) and everlasting Happiness in the World to come; we may depend upon it that no Accidents can ever ruin our Peace;—a Peace which is thus firmly established; we shall assuredly *possess our Souls in Patience*, live perfectly contented in all Circumstances, and be providentially sustained under the greatest Troubles of Humanity.

It is such a Disposition as this alone that will infallibly support us under those dreadful Afflictions which no earthly

earthly Expedient can remove: A Disposition which it is the great Business of *Philosophy* to aspire at, and *Christianity* to maintain: A Disposition, on the Attainment of which the truest Happiness of our whole Lives, both in *this* World, and the *next*, absolutely depends; which whoever possesses, tho' in the very *worst* Condition, cannot be *miserable*, and whoever wants, even in the *best*, cannot be *happy*.

In a Word; *whatever* Part we are commanded to act in this great Theatre, let us beg of God's holy Spirit to enable us to perform it *well*.—It will then be a Matter of Indifference to us whether the Character we appear in be high or low. We shall still be possessed of an approving Conscience, that Sunshine of the Soul, which is the greatest of all intellectual Pleasures, and will not fail to en-

liven the darkest Seasons of Distress.—
Above all Things, let us look forward
into the *Eternal State*, and endeavor to
prepare our Hearts and Affections for it.
Let us resolve never to murmur at any
Accidents we meet with in this our short
Journey to the *heavenly Jerusalem*.—
Never let us suffer any of the Enjoy-
ments or Vexations of a transient World,
to divert us from pursuing our DUTY
to GOD: But let us make it our princi-
pal Study to please HIM in every Step
we take.—*This* is the Way to obtain
Peace and Content here; *this only* is the
Way to arrive at immortal Bliss hereafter.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, Glory, &c.
Amen.

S E R M O N X I V .

O n P R A Y E R i n g e n e r a l .

1 T H E S S . V . 1 7 .

Pray without ceasing.



S E R M O N K I V.

On Prayer in general.

1 T H E S S. V. 17.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

THIS is one of those many useful Admonitions which we find scattered thro' the Writings of this great Author, without being confined to Method or Connexion. It is ranked among the Number of those spiritual Precepts which he delivered promiscuously, just as they were dictated by that holy Spirit, which was his constant Director. For the proper Understanding of which, I earnestly request your Attention to such Reflexions as have occurred to me under the following Heads :

390 *On Prayer in general.* [Ser. XIV.

1st, I will treat on Prayer in general:

2dly, Explain what the Circumstance here annexed to it, (*without ceasing*) doth imply.

3dly, Consider what *Qualifications* are requisite to an acceptable Performance of this Duty. And

4thly, Endeavor to enforce the Importance of the Subject, from the great *Advantages* arising from such a Communion with God.

1st, I will treat on Prayer in general.

Prayer, significantly speaking, is either *oral* or *mental*. It is either an Act of the Mouth, or a Meditation of the Mind.—

It is the blessed Instrument, by which the Soul is permitted to converse with

her

her Creator, to pour out all her Wants and Desires before him, and implore his almighty Aid, Comfort, and Protection. It includes, in its full Extent, all Manner of Devotion, by which we have the Honor and Privilege of being joined in Fellowship with the most High. And it is branched out into a Variety of Significations;—as Petition, Confession, Intercession, Praise, and Thanksgiving.

Petition is that solemn and delightful Communication betwixt our heavenly Father and ourselves, wherein we should humbly beg for a Supply of all Things necessary and convenient us; for Patience in Adversity, and Consolation in Distress; for a Continuance, or Restoration, of those greatest of all temporal Blessings, Health and Peace; for Ability to acquit ourselves with Diligence, Propriety and Honor, in our respective Stations;

tions; for Security against Injuries; and for every reasonable Accommodation of Life. More especially is it our Duty, under this Article, to supplicate the Favor of Heaven in all our *spiritual* Concerns. And to this Purpose, there cannot be a more necessary and beneficial Employment, than fervently to intreat God's Pardon for all our past Transgressions, thro' the Merits of Christ; to deprecate his Wrath and Vengeance, and to solicit his inestimable Grace to direct our whole future Deportment.

Confession imports a willing, but contrite Acknowledgment of our innate Depravity; that we are weak, imperfect, sinful Creatures; that we live in a State of absolute and continual Dependence upon God; that every good Thing we enjoy is the Product of his Goodness, and every good Thought, Word, and Deed,

Deed, the Effect of his divine Grace.——
 We do not here erroneously betray, but
 voluntarily declare, our own Unworthi-
 ness;—we even plead guilty;—are self-
 convicted,—self-condemned. We con-
 fess the Contrast betwixt our Ignorance,
 and God's Omniscience; our Impotence,
 and his almighty Power; our Wicked-
 ness, and his spotless Purity. In short,
 we hereby proclaim God to be the Au-
 thor of universal Good, both to the Souls
 and Bodies of Men; that to his inexhau-
 stible Bounty we stand indebted for eve-
 ry Blessing of *this* Life, and to his infinite
 Mercy, in the *Redemption*, for all our
 Hopes of Happiness in the *next*.

Intercession denotes that we should pray
 not only for our Relatives and Friends
 in particular, but in general, and that
 unexceptionably, for all Mankind. It
 reminds us that Christianity is a com-
 municative

municative Profession, and instructs us to
 implore the Mercy of God in Behalf of
 our Brethren, as well as ourselves,—
 nay, * (according to the Gospel) even
 our greatest Enemies. It therefore com-
 prehends a religious, disinterested, and
 unlimited Charity. This is its insepa-
 rable, and most distinguishing Charac-
 teristic. For it is unnatural to intercede
 with God for those, whom Enmity hath,
 at that very Instant, divided from our
 Affections. It is highly necessary that
 we should *first be reconciled to our Brother*,
 before we presume to *offer* so solemn a
 Sacrifice.—If then we have a *Quarrel*
against any, let us *forgive*,—let us *pray* for
 them. It is impossible for *me* to express,
 or for *you*, without Experience, to im-
 agine, what a *sweet Revenge* this is.—
 What better Expedient can we find to
 smother all our Animosities and Affronts?
 What

* Vide Mat. v. 44.

What more probable Method can we use to soften the obdurate Heart, and melt it (if you will allow the *Paradox*) into a joyful Sorrow? When the truly charitable and enraptured Soul is soaring to the Throne of Grace, on the Wings of ardent Prayer, pleading for its Enemy as well as itself, and burying every evil Act and Sentiment in Oblivion; when it thus resolutely obeys, and humbly imitates its great Master, in rendering Good for Evil,—what an heavenly Sensation does it enjoy! What a noble, what an exalted Satisfaction is this! And how infinitely superior to the common, but narrow-hearted Means of Revenge! This is the Remedy I would prescribe to heal a disordered, and malevolent Disposition. It is an excellent one indeed. It warms and dilates the Heart, opens and enlarges the Soul, and is one of the best Preparatives

tives for that Place, where all is Forgiveness, Harmony and Love.

Praise implies a becoming Reverence, Esteem, and Worshipping of God's ever blessed Name: a pleasing Idea, and delightful Admiration of his glorious Attributes; magnifying, loving, and imitating his divine Perfections; honoring and extolling his almighty Wisdom, in the Wonderful Works of the Creation; and adoring his perfect Goodness, in all the Dispensations of his Providence.

In this Manner should we † "*praise the Lord for his Goodness: and declare the Wonders that he doth for the Children of Men.*"

Finally:—*Thanksgiving* expresses an Heart-felt Sense of the numberless Obligations which the Almighty vouchsafes to

† Psal. cvii. 8.

to heap upon us: It is the natural Exercise of an ingenuous Mind, in Return for all those valuable Gifts and Benefits, so often re-duplicated,—received, and enjoyed every Moment. With grateful and admiring Hearts, should we celebrate the Name of our common Benefactor, for the constant Effects of his divine Goodness, experienced by ourselves and by all Mankind. We should pay to him alone our chearful Tribute of Homage, Gratitude, and Obedience, for our Creation, Preservation, and for every Blessing of Life; but, above all, for that inestimable Mercy in the Redemption of our immortal Souls by Jesus Christ; for the Means of Grace, tendered to our Acceptance in the Gospel, as well as in the Assistance of his holy Spirit; and for the precious Hope that he has thereby given us of the Pardon of our Sins, and of eternal Glory.——Thus
should

should we § “give Thanks always for all
 “Things unto God and the Father, in the
 “Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus
 should our Souls magnify the Lord, and
 with fervent Gratitude adore him for *all*
his Benefits.

All these devotional Performances does
 PRAYER, in its most extensive Latitude,
 comprehend. But in the more limited
 and usual Acceptation of the Word, it
 denotes the single Act of *Petition* only,
 as before described. I will now

2dly, Explain what the Circumstance
 here annexed to this Duty (*without*
ceasing) doth imply.

In either of the Senses above-men-
 tioned, whether we admit the general,
 or only the particular Interpretation, this
 Phrase,

Phrase, *pray without ceasing*, cannot be accepted *literally*, as if the Apostle enjoined the Duty of Prayer to be adhered to without Intermiſſion, and never to be discontinued in the Act; becauſe this is inconfiſtent with other eſſential Rules of Religion, and indeed quite impracticable. But it implies that we ſhould be anxious in embracing every Opportunity of Prayer, as far as conſiſts with other neceſſary Duties, and as the Exigence of particular Circumſtances will permit.

A regular Attendance on *public Worſhip*, at all ſtated Times, and in thoſe holy Places appointed by Authority for that Purpoſe, is indiſpenſibly required, and included in this Injunction. Few, very few are the Excuses that can properly vindicate an Omiſſion here. *An Ox, or an Aſs* perhaps may *fall into a Pit*, which it is certainly lawful to *pull out on*
the

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the Sabbath-Day: Or, by Sicknefs we
may be confined to the Chamber, instead
of being able to repair to the Sanctuary:
But no trivial Plea will God admit to
justify a wilful Neglect of *the Place where*
his Honor dwelleth.—Well would *They*
do seriously to consider this, who pre-
sume to *dispense with* so material a Part
of their Duty! Very different was holy
David's Disposition—(not to mention the
primitive Christians, the Apostles, and
Christ himself, who *taught daily in the*
Temple,) from Persons of this ungrateful
Stamp. So fervent was his Desire (when
banished from his beloved and impe-
rial City) of being restored to the *Ark of*
God, that his Deprivation of *that alone,*
seemed to sit heavier upon him, than the
Exile itself. † “*One Thing,*” says he, (as
if there had been but a single Favor
worth petitioning for) “*have I desired of*
“ *the*

† Psa. xxvii. 4.

“ *the Lord, which I will require : even that*
 “ *I may dwell in the House of the Lord all*
 “ *the Days of my Life, to behold the fair*
 “ *Beauty of the Lord, and to visit his Tem-*
 “ *ple.*” Again, he expresses the Ardor
 of his Soul on the same Occasion, in
 the most passionate Manner; * “ *My Soul*
 “ *is athirst for God, yea even for the living*
 “ *God : when shall I come to appear before*
 “ *the Presence of God ?*” And in another
 Place he cries out with Rapture, † “ *I*
 “ *was glad when they said unto me : We will*
 “ *go into the House of the Lord.*”—Lo!
 This is the blessed House of Joy, Har-
 mony, and Peace! Here all Contentions
 cease, and all Indignities are forgot!—
 Here is the most lively Representation of
 Heaven upon Earth! We here fall down,
 as Children before the Footstool of the
 same Father, and offer up our mutual In-
 tercessions to him. ’Tis here we partake

D d

of

* Psa. xlii. 2.

† Psa. cxxii. 1.

of all the Benefits conveyed to us in the holy Sacraments; *here* enjoy the Advantage of united Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings,—and, I hope I may add, —wholesome Instructions; Instructions intended to enable us *to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Here, I presume, it will not be reckoned a Deviation from the Subject, if I observe that we should not only *frequent*, but *reverence* the Sanctuary. We should be *sincere*, as well as *constant* Worshippers. We should take especial Care to bring to *this* Place penitent Hearts, and pure Affections. And we should never resort to our *Sion* for the Sake only of complying with general Custom, or to gratify an itching Curiosity; to flutter in a silken Vestment, or expose a glittering Ear-Ring: This would be acting the most ridiculous

diculous Part of Folly indeed: It would be studying, in the very worst Sense, to varnish the Casket, instead of polishing the Jewel: And (which is itself a flagrant Degree of Vice) it would be contributing to the Destruction of others by a dangerous Example.—Nay it would be worse than all this; it would be the basest Ingratitude—Ingratitude to our best Friend. It would be worse than Ingratitude; it would be Treason;—Treason against the King of Heaven. It would be worse than Treason; it would be Sacrilege;—robbing God of the Honor due to his sacred Majesty. It would be worse than Sacrilege; it would be Mockery, Presumption, Prophaneness, Sacrilege, all united.—For God's Sake let us consider, my Brethren, that our Business *here* is of a different Nature,—of the highest Moment,—as it relates to the Service and Glory of God, the Establish-

ment and Preservation of mutual Charity, and the Salvation of our own Souls. If we wish to pursue these great Designs, let us banish all Unseemliness of Behaviour from our Assembly, and, if possible, not suffer so much as an abstracted Thought to intrude. Let us discard all inordinate Affections, and fordid Views. And while the *Mouth* is uttering nothing but Honor, and Glory, and Worship, let the H E A R T correspond with it: That, being disburthened of every sensual Incumbrance, it may ascend, with all the Strength of an heavenly Idea, to *that Temple, where our Saviour Christ is gone before*: where They who now love and adore God with Sincerity, shall one Day *see him as he is*, and love and adore him in a more eminent Degree, and that for ever.

This Precept of the Apostle may also
very

very well be understood to exact from us a frequent Observance of *private*, as well as public Devotion. In this Respect, it is difficult to determine whether the social, or the solitary Life is the more eligible. They are both consistent with, and equally necessary to complete, the Christian Character. And therefore *one* cannot properly be recommended without the *other*. That same celebrated and illustrious Saint, who was so great an Advocate for united Prayer, and himself so exemplary a Worshipper *in the Courts of the Lord's House*, was no less zealous in urging the Duties of the Closet.—

* “Commune,” says he, “*with your own Heart, and in your Chamber, and be still.*”

There “*offer the Sacrifice of Righteousness: and put your Trust in the Lord.*” The same Mouth which says, † “*I will give thee Thanks in the great Congregation:*

D d 3

“*I will*

* Psa. iv. 4, 5. † Psa. xxxv. 18.

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“ *I will praise thee among much People,*”
also ventures to make this Appeal to the
God of his Confidence; † “ *Have I not*
“ *remembered thee in my Bed: and thought*
“ *upon thee when I was waking?*” And in
another Place he forms this truly lauda-
ble, and pious Resolution, § “ *In the*
“ *Evening, and Morning, and at Noon-*
“ *Day will I pray, and that instantly: and*
“ *he shall hear my Voice.*”

Such also was the devout Practice of
Daniel, that faithful *Servant of the living*
God. Tho’ he had the Honor of being
created chief President over so large a
Kingdom, and prime Minister to the
greatest Monarch in the World, yet no
Care or Engagement could divert him
from *praying and making Supplication be-*
fore his God. And though a firm and un-
alterable Decree was established, (the
Sanction

† Psa. lxiii. 7. § Psa. lv. 18.

Sanction of the royal Mandate being obtained for that Purpose) that whosoever should offer a Petition to *any God or Man* (the King excepted) *for thirty Days*, should be cast into the Den of Lyons, yet even this could not deter him from his accustomed Duty. No Danger could eradicate this settled Habit; no Fear subdue this glorious Principle.—Divine Grace had interwoven it with the human Mind. For the sacred Story informs us, that || “ *he kneeled upon his*
“ *Knees three Times a Day, and prayed,*
“ *and gave Thanks before his God, as he*
“ *did aforetime.*”

But behold a greater than either the Psalmist, or the Prophet, is here!—The Example of our *blessed Lord* is a standing Proof of the Necessity of religious Retirement. It is alone a sufficient Recom-

D d 4 mendment

|| Dan. vi. 10.

mendation of so amiable, so divine a Practice. If the Temple and the Synagogue were daily honored with his Presence, and bore Witness to the best Instructions that ever proceeded from the Mouth of Man, so, on the other Hand, we find him retiring from the Multitude, and indulging grateful Inter-course with his heavenly Father.—A Mountain, a Desert, and a Garden did the Son of God consecrate by the solemn Exercises of Fasting, Meditation, and Prayer.

Thus should We, in Imitation of those holy Men, but chiefly from a pure Regard to this last-mentioned great Exemplar, this bright Model of all Goodness, and all Perfection, frequently retire from the busy World, to enjoy Communion with the God of our Being.—

What an Honor, what a Privilege should

we

we esteem this! Solitude, in this exalted Sense, is indisputably the most improving Society. This surely is engaging the most delightful Correspondence: this is cultivating the noblest Friendship;—a Correspondence that will not fail to enliven every gloomy Interval,—a Friendship, without Treachery, and that will last for ever.—We cannot, I trust, be so stupidly remiss as to forego so high an Honor, nor so ungratefully impious as to neglect such a solemn Duty, for any Engagement merely secular. Diversion, Labor, Commerce, Learning itself, should here yield the Pre-eminence.—They should be all *still*, while we hold private Converse with the Lord Jehovah; all give Way to this more material Business, this far more profitable Employment.—Pure, genuine Devotion indeed can never be unseasonable or impertinent. When the Disposition is cultivated for
it,

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it, and it has taken Root in the Heart, it will naturally spring forth, tho' in the Midst of our ordinary Occupations.—

And in this Sense it is becoming to offer our silent Prayers, both *in Season, and out of Season.* Every pious Breathing will be heard, every inward Ejaculation accepted by the great Searcher of Hearts, darted from the *Shop*, or from the *Field*.

—But what I am here more particularly recommending, is a frequent Retirement from the common Stage of Action, a Suspension of every other Duty, while we address the Almighty *in Secret.* And is not this a very *reasonable*, as well as requisite *Service*? What can be more so, than for a poor, frail, dependent Creature, not only to embrace every public Opportunity of Devotion, but privately to dedicate stated and periodical Seasons, to honoring, worshipping, and adoring its omnipotent Creator, and most merciful

ciful Benefactor?——Does not Reason alone, I say, inculcate the Propriety of this Doctrine? For how can we expect that God will crown our Undertakings with Success; how think to pursue them with Alacrity, or reap any solid Comfort from them in the Event; how, more especially, hope to secure the Happiness of our immortal Souls, without first humbly invoking his all-sufficient Grace and Assistance? without endeavoring to engage his Blessing upon all our Labors and Designs, spiritual and temporal, by that very Method which his own Son hath enjoined?——Hear how this gracious Counsellor both exhorts and encourages us, in the same Breath, to a Performance of this our noblest Duty! * “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*”——And again, in Words directly applicable to
to

* Mat. vii. 7.

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to my Purpose, † “*When thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in Secret, and thy Father, which seeth in Secret, shall reward thee openly.*”——

To style this barely an equitable Command, would be derogatory to the blessed Mouth that gave it. Say, can our loftiest Ideas form a more exalted Honor, a more absolute Benefit, a more transcendent Mercy, than to be permitted to approach the infinite and adorable God whenever we please; to correspond with him freely, and without Interruption; and, by Virtue of his own most indulgent Promise, thro’ a Mediator, claim a reasonable Supply of temporal Accommodations, and all needful spiritual Assistance?

If an *earthly Potentate* should require
our

† Mat. vi. 6.

our Attendance in a Matter of Moment, relative either to his Service, or our Advantage; how joyfully should we receive the Summons!—With what Assiduity should we strive to acquit ourselves with Honor on such an Occasion!—And shall the incomprehensibly great and tremendous Majesty of Heaven, the *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the only Ruler of Princes*, shall HE sue for a Compliance with his Commands in vain? Shall HE admonish, urge, intreat us to pursue Measures directly tending to our unspeakable Happiness in a future and never-ending State; and shall we disdain his Counsel, or slight his Promises?—Is it really because we are *very busy* that we cannot wait upon God; or because we are *idle* and indifferent in Matters which relate *only* to the Welfare of our Souls? Is it *Wine and good Fellowship*,—a little *jovial Pastime*,—or a continued
Round

Round of *formal Visits*, most *complaisantly* received, and as *punctually* returned, to which we *wisely* postpone the Service we owe to God, and to our own Salvation? — Pardon the *Irony*; if you think it becomes not this serious Subject, or this solemn Place. — And permit me to carry on your Attention, while I observe,

Lastly, That this Exhortation to *pray without ceasing*, comprehends also a *steady Perseverance* in this devout Practice.

As, in Mechanical Employments, Men are reputed to prosecute their respective Trades incessantly, tho' the Work itself occasionally ceases; so we may be properly deemed to fulfil this Precept in the Text, when we maintain an *habitual* Inclination to it, and are punctual in the Observance of our Devotions, both public and private, throughout the *general*

Tenor

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Tenor of our Lives. This is very significantly termed *the Spirit of Prayer*.—Though the actual Prosecution is often necessarily discontinued, yet the main Design is grounded in the Heart, and *habitually* persisted in with a firm Resolution, and unwearied Diligence.

In the same Restriction, we are to understand several hyperbolical Expressions of Christ and his Apostles.—Thus we are admonished *always to pray, and not to faint; to continue instant in Prayer; to watch thereunto with all Perseverance; and to give Thanks always for all Things unto God.* All which Phrases, tho' they cannot be supposed *literally* to injoin a constant and unremitted Adherence to these Duties, yet *figuratively* imply a regular, vigilant, and chearful Attendance upon them.—† “*My Lips,*” says the delighted Harmonist,

† Psa. lxxi. 21, 22.

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Harmonist, “ *will be fain when I sing unto*
“ *Thee : And my Tongue shall talk of thy*
“ *Righteousness all the Day long.*” And
again ; * “ *As long as I live will I magnify*
“ *thee on this Manner : and lift up my*
“ *Hands in thy Name.*”——And again;
† “ *Every Day will I give Thanks unto thee :*
“ *and praise thy Name for ever and ever.*”

These are noble Resolutions, and fully
expressive of the Duty I am recom-
mending ; viz. a hearty and unalterable
Perseverance in Prayer. As this is mani-
festly a distinguished Part of our Reli-
gion, so should we reckon it one of the
principal Employments of our Life.——

To hope that every flight, cursory, luke-
warm Address, offered as it were acci-
dentally, or when we happen to be at
Leisure, and not otherwise engaged, will
be waisted up to Heaven, and obtain its
Errand, would be dangerous Flattery.—

God

* Psa. lxiii. 5.

† Psa. cxlv. 2.

God wants not the reluctant Labor of our Lips. He will not be treated with in this superficial Manner. He loves the *cheerful Petitioner*, as well as *Giver*. He expects to be *assiduously*, as well as *seriously* applied to; and admits no Rival in our Affections. We should be both *importunate* and ardent Solicitors at the Throne of Grace. We should never flee from this noble Conflict; never tire in this spiritual Engagement. It is not an *Enemy*, remember, that we have to contend with:—No: it is our Patron, our Protector, our best Friend: It is our adorable and everlasting God: It is our Redeemer in that God, and our Sanctifier in that Redeemer. THIS is a Friend too compassionate to be solicited in vain.—He will not,—He *cannot* resist the reiterated Attacks of an industrious Supplicant.—Omnipotence itself *is not able* to hold out long against a close and perpetual

tual Siege of fervent Prayer. Though he may refuse an immediate Compliance with our Petitions, and for a While suspend his *Fiat*, yet let us not despond, but continue pertinacious in our Suit: not daunted by any Repulse; not impatient thro' any Delay. For depend upon it, tho' we are Sinners, † “*God hath not forgotten to be gracious; nor will he shut up his loving Kindness in Displeasure.*” As He complains, by his Prophet, of being *weary to bear* the Sins of his People, so, on the contrary, should we endeavor to weary him with our incessant Prayers. We should resolutely persist till our Addresses are received, and our Desires accomplished.—Our Devotion should not break out into sudden, short, interrupted Flashes, which are no sooner kindled than they expire; but continue burning with one steady and unclouded Light. We should go on *seeking* till we
can

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can *find*, and not desist from *knocking*, till the Doors of Mercy are *opened*.—— Thus should we *wrestle* with the all-powerful God. We should *hold him* and determine * *not to let him go, except he blefs us*. And thus, by a Kind of irresistible Importunity, shall we be able (if I dare use so bold a *Figure*) to subdue the King of all the Earth;—to *conquer Him*, who is absolutely *unconquerable*.—— Thus shall we be justly styled *valiant*, as well as † *violent* Soldiers, and may be said, in the Language of Scripture, to *take the Kingdom of Heaven by Force*.

The Text affords such ample Room for Reflexion, and is of so interesting, as well as extensive a Nature, that, to confine it within the Limits of a single Discourse, must either cramp the Subject,

E e 2

or

* Vide Gen. xxxii. 26.

† Vide Mat. xi. 12.

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or fatigue your Attention. I therefore
intend, with God's Assistance, to expa-
tiate yet more fully upon it some future
Opportunity.

May the Duties of the present Day
sink into our Hearts, and prove condu-
cive (by the Blessing of the Holy Spirit)
to our real Comfort in this World, and
inexpressible Happiness in the next!—
This I humbly beg of God to grant, in
the Name, and thro' the Mediation of his
Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom,
with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Ho-
nor, Glory, &c. Amen.

S E R.

S E R M O N X V .

The necessary QUALIFICATIONS of
PRAYER; with its Advantages.

1 T H E S S V . 1 7 .

Pray without ceasing.

SERMON XV.

The necessary Qualifications of

PRAYERS: with



and a Prayer-book containing

1708

S E R M O N X V .

*The necessary Qualifications of Prayer ; with
its Advantages.*

1 T H E S S . V . 17 .

P R A Y W I T H O U T C E A S I N G .

IN a late Discourse from these Words,
I undertook to enlarge on Prayer in
general; and shewed that it comprizes,
in its most extensive Signification, all
the devotional Exercises of *Petition, Con-
fession, Intercession, Praise, and Thank-
giving.*—I likewise endeavored to ex-
plain, what the Circumstance here an-
nexed (*without ceasing*) doth figuratively 414
imply.—Let us now consider,

3dly, What *Qualifications* are requisite

E c 4

to

to an acceptable Performance of this Duty.

First, An humble and unaffected Consciousness of our *natural Depravity*, is one of the most essential Characteristics of Prayer. 'Till we become perfectly acquainted with the Nature of ourselves, it will be impossible, with any Propriety, to address our Maker. Would it not be palpable Mockery to apply for Succor or Assistance, without first confessing how much we want it? Or by what Argument can we hope to obtain a Remedy, if we will not acknowledge that we labor under any Disease? But if we are once struck with a deep Sense of our own Unworthiness and Inability, we then naturally, and not without evident Reason, have Recourse to that Physician, who alone can heal the Wounds of a vitiated Mind, as well as rectify an evil

Habit

Habit of Body. And we have the undeniable Security of his *written Word*, that, upon this Condition, we shall find Relief. For, * “ *if we confess our Sins,*”—if we lament the wretched State of our Defilement and Pollution, and, with a truly penitential Sorrow, make our Application unto the Lord,—“ *he is faithful* “ *and just to forgive us our Sins, and to* “ *cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*”—† “ *A broken and a contrite Heart, O God,* we are assured, “ *Thou wilt not despise.*”

Whenever then we presume to engage in this divine Employment, that of P R A Y E R, the Soul should be very sensibly affected with its infirm and polluted State. It should abhor its own Impurity, at the same Time that it adores the unblemished Holiness of God. The most perfect and irreproachable among
us,

* 1 John i. 9.

† Psa. li. 17.

us, should disclaim all arrogant Pretensions to Self-Merit, and, without Reluctance, adopt the Prophet's Confession, † "*We are all as an unclean Thing, and all our Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags.*" When we thus clearly see our degenerate, lost Condition; how far we have deviated from that native Rectitude, which adorned the first happy State in Paradise; and feel the Weight of our present Guilt; we are then ready to awake from our carnal Lethargy; are convinced how much we owe to the Mercies of God in a Redeemer; and qualified to pray earnestly for Deliverance and Reconciliation. We no sooner perceive the dire Effects of that Venom which infests the Heart of all human Kind, than we labor incessantly to extract it. When we become *sensible* of the Danger that perhaps for several Years

we

† Isa. lxiv. 6.

we have been exposed to, and recollect that we have for so long a While been dallying upon the very Brink of Ruin, we then, if ever, rise from the *Delirium*, and importunately sue for the Benefits of redeeming Mercy, and co-operating Grace. A real Belief, an actual Perception of the dreadful Risque we have been running, will surely hereafter make us concerned to avoid it. Conscience must be steeled indeed to repel the Force of Self-Conviction. When we find ourselves *in* the Storm, *feel* its Severity, and perceive how it threatens absolute Destruction; such a Sensation, I would imagine, must be the leading Step to fervent, contrite Prayer: It will induce us to apply with eager Haste to that Power who alone can “forgive us all “that is past,” afford a Shelter from the present impending Danger, and defend us in every future Period of our Being.

Another

Another Qualification indispensibly requisite to a due Performance of this great Duty of Prayer, is a BELIEVING HEART.—* “*He that cometh to God,*” says the Apostle, “*must believe that he is,*” “*and that he is a Rewarder of them that*” “*diligently seek him.*”——When we approach the all-glorious Majesty of Heaven, humble ourselves before him, and assume the Honor of his Service, we must be convinced that he is God; that he is a Power of infinite Perfection; and will certainly reward all his faithful Worshipers with suitable Success here, and everlasting Glory hereafter.——No threatening Dangers, Hardships, or Distresses should be permitted ever to undermine this steady Conviction. And, whatever Afflictions we actually labor under, or with whatever Difficulties we are encompassed, as it is beyond the Possibility of

* Heb. xi. 6.

of a Doubt that God is *able* to extricate us whenever he pleases, so should we entertain a full Persuasion that he is also *inclined* to do it. For † “ *the Lord is nigh*
 “ *unto all them that call upon him: yea all*
 “ *such as call upon him faithfully. He will*
 “ *fulfil the Desire of them that fear him: he*
 “ *also will hear their Cry and will help them.*”
 It is this omnipotent and merciful Deity, who is eminently stiled our *Shield*, our *Buckler*, our *Fortress*; the *Horn* also of our *Salvation*, and our *Refuge*. And it is the same adorable Being who hath declared by an Authority, into which he hath inspired nothing but Truth and Holiness, that he ‡ “ *giveth to all Men liberally, who*
 “ *ask in FAITH;*” and that § “ *whatso-*
 “ *ever we shall ask in Prayer, BELIEVING,*
 “ *we shall receive.*”

As oft then as we pay our adoring
 Homage

† Psa. cxlv. 18, 19. ‡ Jam. i. 5, 6. § Mat. xxi. 22.

Homage at the Footstool of his exalted Majesty, let us remember that we cannot present ourselves as qualified for this high Honor and Privilege, without an unbiaffed Faith. We must maintain an habitual Belief, that the Almighty God is the Author of our Life, and every Blessing that we enjoy in it; that He is the divine Original of all that is amiable, grand, and good; the beneficent Donor of all that is truly pleasant and profitable; the Father of inexhaustible Mercies, and the God of unspeakable Consolation. We must believe also, that this adorable and uncreated Being, has both Ability and Will to comply with all our laudable Requests; and that He will not fail to lend his chearful Ear to the faithful and devout Supplicant; but will grant him his Heart's Desire in every individual Petition, as far as is consistent with the perfect Righteousness of an all-wise

all-wise God to give, and expedient for Man, as a sinful and imperfect Creature, to receive.—And further we must be convinced, that God is the free and munificent “Giver of all *spiritual* Gifts;” the perpetual Source of all substantial Good: that he is the Author of our Faith itself, and all the coelestial Graces that adorn the human Mind: that to Him we are indebted for all the Comforts and Instructions of his holy Word: and that he will fulfil all the gracious Promises contained therein.—And herein particularly is it incumbent on us to believe that the blessed God, who hath endowed us with immortal Souls, and impressed upon them the Characters of his own Similitude, hath redeemed them from a State of Misery, and rendered them capable of enjoying endless Glory and Happiness, through the Mediation, Sufferings, Death, and Intercession of his own
Son:

Son: that by the shedding of his precious Blood we are empowered to obliterate Sins of the blackest Dye, and, upon our hearty Repentance, become as absolutely re-instated in his Favor, as if we had never transgressed at all.—And finally, it is our Duty to believe in that Holy Spirit, by whom only we can obtain *Access unto the Father*, and who himself graciously invites us to this spiritual Repast of Prayer; who condescends to indulge us with his own familiar Acquaintance, and lead us to the Honor and Enjoyment of that Friendship wherein the very Essence of all Honor and Joy consists. To this same divine Person, we are to ascribe the Merit of our Prayers, and all our religious Services. We are to acknowledge with becoming Gratitude, that it is He who lightens our intellectual Darknefs, strengthens our Infirmities, and enables us to sub-
due

due the formidable Enemies of our *own Household*: in Sum; that it is He who guards us from all Manner of Sin, who inspires us with every pious Wish, and who dictates and assists us in the Performance of every virtuous Word and Act.

Another Qualification, which is absolutely necessary for the Suppliant to be possessed of, is a *sincere Attention of Mind*. The H E A R T is so far from being excluded from a Participation in the Duty which I am enforcing, that it claims the principal and most essential Part of it.—The flexible Knee, and even the expressive Lip, are more excusable than *This*. For with the Mouth Confession only is made unto Salvation; but it is with the Heart that we must believe unto righteousness. THIS to an all-knowing God is the noblest Instrument of Communication.—It should be the ever-faithful

Dictator to the Tongue, as well as our Words the perfect Image of our real Sentiments.—For whatever our *Words* may be, it is the Rectitude and Sincerity of the *Heart* alone that can engage the Attention of the Almighty.—Words themselves are nothing but the mere Motion of the Lips. They can never succeed at the Throne of Grace; never bring down a Blessing from those Mansions where nothing but Purity and Sincerity will be accepted, unless they ascend thither with the genuine Language of the Heart. If they want *this* Foundation, they are worse than transient Sounds that might die away and be forgot; they are hypocritical Speeches that are recorded with indelible Infamy, and will be produced against the Sycophant at the great Day of Accounts.

Let us therefore strictly examine ourselves

selves whether we are possessed of that true Spirit of Devotion which is seated in the Heart and no where else? Whether we are really affected with such an ardent Love of the Goodness of God, that, when we pray with the Mouth, our Hearts celebrate and adore him in a silent Language, superior to that of Words, and feel such Extasies of solid Joy, as are—only to be felt, but not described? And if we find ourselves deficient in this great Point, let us make it a principal Subject in our Prayers to beg of God to give us *Grace* to pray with *Sincerity*; to enable us to prevent all distracted Thoughts from intruding into so solemn a Service; and utterly to seclude all worldly Cares and Anxieties. —Then will the Almighty hear our Prayers, and accept our Offerings. This fixed, steady Attention, this true, undissembled Fervor of the Soul, will pre-

vail more with the omniscient God, “unto whom all Hearts are open,” and all secret Breathings known, than the most labored Composition, than the most nervous Language, than the most flourishing Expressions of the Mouth.

There is yet another Endowment very requisite to adorn the Character of the sincere Worshipper: I mean a RESOLUTION to exert our own Endeavors in obtaining those Blessings which we are at the same Time intreating Heaven to bestow.—What can be more reasonable than this? What more fit and becoming than to employ our Abilities in our own Favor? We must be indolent indeed, if we sit still and inactive, when it is our Duty to labor in promoting our own Advantage. How can we hope for the *supernatural* Aid of the Holy Spirit of God, without making a right Use
of

of those *natural* Means with which that God has blessed us? Or what less can we deem it than open Mockery to solicit for Benefits which we ourselves use no Endeavors to procure? Our gracious Lord indeed promises, that if we *ask* we *shall receive*;—an Assurance for which we can never render equal Thanks and Praise?—But are we for this Reason to suppose, that every slight, accidental Petition, will unexceptionably succeed, without the Exertion of our own Strength? without the Concurrence of those Faculties which are given us on Purpose to be employed in every laudable *Act* as well as *Word*? This would be harboring an idle, a ridiculous, a prophane Notion. For Instance, what can be more so than to deprecate Almighty Vengeance on Account of any Sin that we have been guilty of, and are still beset with, if on our Part, we make not

the least Effort to subdue it? And with what Color of Reason or Conscience can we implore the Direction and Assistance of heavenly Grace, to guard us from being ensnared in Vice, and to forward us in the Paths of Virtue, when we suspend our own Caution, and pursue such Measures as naturally excite wicked Temptations, and in which Piety can have no Concern? Surely this is acting in a Manner both contrary to our own Reason, and utterly inconsistent with the divine Counsels.

Since then we can form no reasonable Expectation of the Efficacy of Prayer itself, unaccompanied with a Resolution of being instrumental, according to our Abilities, in gaining those Blessings we petition for, let us rouse from a Spirit of Indolence and Supineness, into Vigor and Activity. And whenever we solicit
the

the Assistance of Grace, let us heartily resolve at the same Time to co-operate with it. Let us make steady Purposes to withstand every Opposition that may occur, and bid Defiance to every Danger that would obstruct us in the Road to Virtue. Let us not only pray for Mercies, but also labor assiduously to secure them. Let us chearfully employ those Powers, and endeavor to act up to the Strength of those Faculties which the Goodness of our Creator hath bestowed upon us. All the Power and Strength that we are possessed of, (be it ever gratefully remembered!) we derive solely from God; but let it not be forgot, that the Neglect of a proper Application of them, will be imputed only to ourselves. For we may be assured, that whoever is not a *Doer* of the Will of God, as well as a *Worshipper*, shall never be blessed in his *Deed*. *This Man's Religion is vain.*—

Let us therefore “*pray always with all
 “ Supplication, that being strengthened with
 “ all Might according to the glorious Power
 “ of Christ Jesus, we may be enabled to work
 “ together with Him, and make our Calling
 “ and Election sure.*”

The great Benefits that accrue from
 a frequent and sincere Communion with
 God in Prayer, I now intend

4thly and **L A S T L Y** to consider:

Ye who have Hearts to enjoy the most
 valuable Treasure you are possessed of,—
 I mean the Treasure contained in that
 best of all Repositories, the **B I B L E**,
 —cannot be ignorant of the mighty In-
 fluence of Prayer. That blessed Book
 of God not only abounds with the most
 engaging *Promises* annexed to this Duty,
 but also particularizes many actual *Per-
 formances*

formances of its amazing Power.—It was *This* that * arrested the Sun in his Career; and both † shut and opened the Windows of Heaven. It was *This*, that by the Mandate of that omnipotent Being which inspired it, ‡ extinguished the Fire that was kindled at *Taberah*, and § extracted the Venom of the fiery Serpents. By Dint of Prayer have Thousands been discomfited, and ten Thousands rescued from the very Jaws of Destruction.——

Why should I mention Instances to Those who are already acquainted with them?

——I need not inform you how, by the Force of Prayer, ‡ *Asa* King of *Judah* subdued a numerous Army of the *Ethiopians*; and how by *This* † *Hezekiah* the King, and *Isaiah* the Prophet, brought down an Angel from Heaven, who cut off the *Affyrians*, and sent away *Sennacherib* with

* Josh. x. 12, 13. † Jam. v. 17, 18. ‡ Vide Num. xi. 2, 3.

§ Vide Num. xxi. 7, 8, 9. † Vide 2 Chron. xiv. 11, 12, 13.

† Vide 2 Chron. xxxii. 20, 21.

with Infamy to his own Land. Nor need I particularly relate what Numbers the same impenetrable Shield has defended in the most imminent Dangers: how it has repelled the † Flames of a *Furnace*; and closed up the ‡ Mouths of *Lions*; how it has put to Flight those bitter Enemies, *Hunger* and *Thirst*, by causing § *Bread* to descend in the Dew of Heaven, and * *Water* to gush out of the flinty Rock:—nay, how it has both † prolonged, and actually ‡ restored Life itself.—But let it suffice to consider at present, how greatly Prayer conduces to our own *personal* Interest.

The Time would fail me, was I here to enumerate all the temporal Blessings which this sacred Correspondence is instrumental in procuring;—such as Health
of

† Vide Dan. iii. ‡ Vide Dan. cap. vi. § Vide Ex. cap. xvi.
• Vide Exod. cap. xvii. † Isa. xxxviii. 5. ‡ 1 Kings xvii. 21, 22.

of Body, and, that still more valuable Gem, Peace of Mind; Success in our different Engagements, Relief under Pains and Distresses, Friends, and all the Comforts, Conveniences, and necessary Accommodations of the present State. I will therefore pass over those inferior Blessings, precious as they are, and confine myself to those of the *spiritual* Kind: The principal, and most comprehensive of which are PARDON and GRACE.

With Respect to the former of these, the following Passage, which you have in one of the Books of *Chronicles*, not dictated only, but uttered by the Mouth of God himself, deserves greatly to be admired. * “ *And the Lord appeared to Solomon by Night, and said unto him, I have heard thy Prayer, and have chosen this Place to myself for an House of Sacrifice.*

“ *If*

* 2 Chron. vii. 12, 13, 14.

“ If I shut up Heaven that there be no Rain,
“ or if I command the Locusts to devour the
“ Land, or if I send Pestilence among my
“ People; if my People, which are called by
“ my Name, shall humble themselves and
“ pray, and seek my Face, and turn from
“ their wicked Ways; then will I hear from
“ Heaven, and will forgive their Sin, and
“ will heal their Land.”——A merciful

Promise this! And though it was directed particularly to Solomon, in Answer to his remarkable Prayer, at the Consecration of the Temple, yet it relates unexceptionably to all Mankind. And it clearly implies, that the Supplicant, who is sincere in his Petitions, (which he cannot be without resolving to *turn from his wicked Ways*) shall not only obtain *Remission of his Sins*, but a Cure for the *Maladies of his wounded Heart*. It shall be healed by the *Uction of that blessed Spirit*,

Spirit, which will likewise sustain him under all his Troubles.

Despair not then, ye contrite and returning Sinners! For, if ye pray with Ardor and Humiliation, God has promised to hear you from Heaven, and forgive your Sins.—What a transcendent Honor, what an immortal Privilege should you esteem this! Is it not *honorable*, beyond Expression, to obtain Audience of the mighty Potentate of all Heaven and Earth, whenever you please? And can there possibly be a greater *Privilege* than to have those Sins, which would otherwise involve you in irretrievable and everlasting Ruin, (upon the very Terms of your *embracing* this Honor) cancelled and forgave?—Resolve therefore with Sincerity and Delight to perform the Duty, and, you may depend upon it, you shall enjoy the beneficial Consequences,

quences, of Prayer. Consider what Encouragement you have to pray, when God says "I will hear you:" Consider what inexpressible Encouragement even the most atrocious Sinners have to *pray*, and that *without ceasing*, when the same merciful Being further promises, and says, "I will forgive your Sins."—Do be persuaded to prove the happy Experiment.—Melt down, ye steeled Hearts! Ye inflexible Knees, be taught to bend! Bend before the great *Immanuel*! For with *Him* you shall find Mercy, and with the Lord *Jehovah* Pardon and Support.

Let us now further consider Prayer as the necessary Channel thro' which are conveyed to us fresh and constant Supplies of *Grace*. Under *this* benign Influence, (which ever freely descends upon it) we shall not only prove it to be the chief Instrument in procuring Forgiveness

giveness for what is past, but our grand Security for the future. It is in this Sense, the Christian's impregnable Fortrefs. It is the great Bulwark of the Soul, wherewith to repel the most violent Attacks of the Enemy. It is *This* that will guard us from all sordid Desires, irregular Affections, and wicked Practices.—Nay, more than this; Prayer will not only be our Protector, but Assistant: It will not barely defend us from the Commission of Vice, but direct and forward us in the Paths of Virtue,—in those Paths which are always trod with Pleasure, and are sure to terminate in Peace. It is certainly the most heavenly Employment upon Earth. For it is by *This* that we contract a Familiarity, and maintain a Friendship with that eternal Spirit, whose Assistance is promised to *them that ask*: By *This* therefore we are enabled not only to subdue our perverse Wills,

Wills, to restrain our headstrong Passions, and to resist almost irresistible Temptations, but also to live in a pleasing, uniform Obedience to the Commands of our blessed Lord. To say all at once, when we consider Prayer as the conditional Security of *God's Grace*, we may well venture to pronounce that all true Christian Faith and Hope, all human and divine Love, all spiritual Joy and Peace, all real Consolation and Support, proceed from this sacred Source.

This is a Subject which it is almost impossible to exhaust.———Let us however endeavor to make a proper Application of those Observations (deficient as they are) which I have taken Occasion to infer from it.———To this Purpose, let us *pray incessantly*, in that copious Latitude of the Phrase, as it was explained in the former Discourse. Let us lose no Opportunity

portunity of practising the several Duties of *public Devotion in the Courts of the Lord's House*. Let no Engagement, but actual Necessity, divert us from worshipping Him in this Holy Temple.— Never let us behold the Gates of our *Jerusalem* standing wide open, while we refuse to enter in. But much rather let us rejoice in this Christian Privilege, and pour out our Souls before their Maker, in a most grateful Reflexion on all his Mercies.—Let us also embrace every convenient Season (abstracted from other necessary Duties) of devoting ourselves to *private Prayer*. Often, very often, let us take a chearful Leave of the busy World; retire from its Vanities; and converse with its adorable Founder. Let us particularly *make the Outgoings of the Morning and Evening* to adore Him.— How seasonable is it, *every Morning*, while the Mind is disburthened of Care,

and the Body unfatigued with Labor, when the Spirits are happily recruited, and the Faculties have received fresh Vigor from the balmy Night,—how seasonable is it *then* to dedicate to HIM the first-Fruits of our diurnal Services! how natural to express the highest Returns of Gratitude we can to the gracious Preserver of our Life, the liberal Bestower and Restorer of all its Comforts! how becoming to implore his all-sufficient Direction in the Pursuit, and his Aid in the Performance of our respective Employments! And how necessary to crave his almighty Protection from all the Perils; Calamities, and Temptations of a wicked World!—*Every Night* also it is requisite that we should close our Business, and bury all our anxious Cares, in silent, but sincere Devotion. We should *then* not only bless the holy Name of God for protecting us from the manifold Dangers, and the more numerous Sins to which

we

we stand every Moment exposed, and implore his Pardon both for all Omissions and Transgressions of our Duty, but likewise pray that he would guard our refreshing Slumbers, watch over us in that State of Oblivion and Insensibility, (that *Interregnum* of Man's Reason) and enable us to rise again in Health, and praise him.

And finally, my Brethren, if we hope to succeed in our Prayers, let our Minds and Affections be united with them.—Let us endeavor to possess ourselves of every *Qualification* requisite for so holy an Employment. Let a *becoming Sense of our own Unworthiness*,—*Faith*,—*Sincerity*, and *Resolution*, combine together.—Never let us presume to affront that good and glorious Being, whose Favor we petition for, by any wicked Action. But let us take especial Care to make our Conduct in general correspond with our *oral Devotions*.—True Religion, let us re-

434 member, does not consist in *Theory*, but in *Practice*; not in *Shadow*, but in *Substance*. —To repeat a mere, spiritless Form of Words, is but to *offer the Sacrifice of Fools*, which will be *turned into Sin*. —But when our Prayers are animated by heavenly Love, Zeal, Gratitude, Trust, and an ardent Desire of pleasing God; when, for His Sake, we sacrifice our Lusts, mortify our unruly Members, and abandon our darling Sins; when we pour out the free Libation of our *Hearts*, as well as *Lips*; and pay him the daily Tribute of our *Obedience*,—then it is that we burn the purest Incense unto the Lord, and present a far more grateful Offering *than thousands of Rams, or ten thousands of Rivers of Oil*. —This will be at once producing the richest Fruits of Prayer, and reaping its best Advantages. —Hereby we shall engage the Favor of that holy Being, who will conduct us safely thro' all the rugged Road of Life; who

who will guard, comfort, and support us amidst its various Pleasures, Pains, and Disappointments: And, as soon as that hastening Period arrives, when both our Sufferings and Enjoyments in this lower World shall cease, and every earthly Scene shall be closed for ever, we shall be translated into that World of Spirits, where the Consolations we have received by Faith only, from our imperfect Devotions here, shall be converted into an Assurance of immortal Bliss, from knowing, enjoying, and adoring our God in full Perfection hereafter.

May that God give us all Grace to pursue, and Power to obtain, this inestimable Happiness, thro' the Merits of his Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour!—To whom, with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, Glory, and Praise, &c. Amen.

who will guard, comfort, and support us
amidst all various Perils, and
Disappointments: And as for the
travelling, and various, when all our
Sufferings and Endurances are
World, both civil, and every earthly
Second, I hope, that we shall
be translated into that World of Spirits,
where the Gospel is more readily
by Faith, and in a more perfect
manner than, that we converted, and an
Assurance of eternal Life, from know-
ing, enjoying, and adoring our God in
all Perfection and blessedness.

May that God give us all Grace to
pursue, and Power to obtain, the in-
estimable Happiness, thro' the merits of
his Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour!—To
whom, with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed
all Honor, Glory, and Praise, &c. Amen.

S E R M O N XVI.

The distinguished Pleasure and Happiness of Religion.

PROV. iii. 17.

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all
her Paths are Peace.*

SERMON XVI.

The distinguished Pleasure and Hap-

piness of Religion.



her Ways are Wisdom, Pleasantness, and all
her Paths are Peace.

S E R M O N XVI.

*The distinguished Pleasure and Happiness of
Religion.*

P R O V. iii. 17.

HER WAYS ARE WAYS OF PLEASANT-
NESS, AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE.

KING Solomon is here no less elegantly than justly animadverting on the Praises of WISDOM. At the thirteenth Verse of this Chapter, he begins his Encomium. “ *Happy is the Man*
“ *that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that*
“ *getteth Understanding. For the Mer-*
“ *chandise of it is better than the Merchan-*
“ *dise of Silver, and the Gain thereof than*
“ *fine Gold. She is more precious than Ru-*
“ *bies: and all the Things thou canst desire,*
“ *are not to be compared unto her. Length*
“ *of*

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“ *of Days is in her right Hand; and in her*
“ *left Hand Riches and Honor. Her Ways*
“ *are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her*
“ *Paths are Peace,*”

Left we should misinterpret so amiable
a Character as this of Wisdom, and, from
a fond Self-Partiality, vainly fancy our-
selves possessed of it when we have not
a proper Claim, I think it necessary to
observe, that it is not attainable by in-
vestigating the various Tracks of *Science*,
tho' never so extensive: it does not con-
sist in nice Speculations, or curious Re-
searches after human Knowledge; but
in admiring, praising, and adoring its
own eternal Fountain. To be endowed
with Wisdom, is to * “ *understand the*
“ *Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge*
“ *of God.*” It is to be endowed with So-
briety, Virtue, Godliness: It is to possess
a Mine

a *Mine* which contains the most invaluable Treasure;—such as, a becoming Reverence of God's holy Name and Authority; an awful and affectionate Regard for his Honor and Service; and an unbiaſſed Obedience to his Commands.—

Briefly, it implies an inflexible Hatred to every Degree of Vice, and a regular Adherence to all the Duties of RELIGION.—THIS is that Wiſdom,

which, in the beautiful Language of Job,

† “ *cannot be gotten for Gold, neither ſhall*

“ *Silver be weighed for the Price thereof.*

“ *It cannot be valued with the Gold of Ophir,*

“ *with the precious Onyx, or the Sapphire.*

“ *The Gold and the Cryſtal cannot equal it:*

“ *and the Exchange of it ſhall not be for*

“ *Jewels of fine Gold. No Mention ſhall*

“ *be made of Coral, or of Pearls, for the*

“ *Price of Wiſdom is above Rubies.——*

“ *The Topaz of Ethiopia ſhall not equal it,*

“ *neither*

† Job xxviii. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

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“neither shall it be valued with pure Gold.”

THIS is that true Wisdom which Solomon likewise so copiously praises, and so fervently recommends. By which we shall not *understand* only, but pursue
† *“Righteousness, and Judgment, and
“Equity; yea every good Path.”*

Admitting *Wisdom* then to bear a synonymous Construction with *Religion*, the Sense of the Text is obvious, and can want no Explication. It is clearly this; that a religious Course of Life is abundantly pleasant in the Pursuit, and will infallibly terminate in true Peace and Happiness. To prove and illustrate the Reasonableness of which Proposition, is the Design of the following Discourse.

It is a peculiar Privilege which Religion enjoys, and, such as renders the
Condition

Condition of her Votaries infinitely preferable to that of all others, that she alone can raise her Ideas above the vanishing Scenes of this lower World, and at once contemplate and converse with the great Creator of it.——If it is allowed that Reason and Philosophy, whose highest Attainments consist in scanning the Works of *Nature* only, have Charms sufficient to attract their Admirers, and recompence the Duties they recommend, what a far nobler and more interesting Pleasure must it be, to break thro' every intercepting Cloud, and by Faith behold the *GOD of Nature*, with all his glorious Attributes,——Attributes such as are scarce more amiable in themselves, than beneficial to Mankind!—How awful indeed, but yet how pleasing a Reflexion is it to meditate on that *Omnipotent Wisdom* which created all Things out of utter Darkness: which both gave them their Existence,
and

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and moulded them into a beauteous and
useful Variety of Forms: which arrayed
the glowing Firmament with all its roll-
ing Wonders; and replenished the Earth
with its numberless Inhabitants!—What
an inexpressibly pleasing Reverence is
likewise excited in the religious Breast,
by reflecting on the *Omnipresence* of the
dread Jehovah! How truly comfortable
is it to believe that the blessed God, the
same infinite and divine Being who cre-
ated, also pervades, actuates, and sup-
ports the whole Universe! that this al-
mighty Father is continually present with
every one of his Children; defends, com-
forts, strengthens, and assists us; attends
us at our going out and coming in; en-
compasses our *Path* and our *Bed*, and is
acquainted with *all our Ways*!—And
how yet more delightful is it to turn our
Contemplations to the unbounded *Good-
ness* of God! Who is there that is not lost
in

in Admiration, or can help being transported into the highest Extacies of Joy, when he reflects on this adorable Attribute of the Deity, as it is so conspicuously displayed in the Operations of PROVIDENCE and of GRACE? *Providence*, so profuse in its Liberality, and *Grace*, so perfectly *sufficient* for our Happiness!—A stupid *Pagan* perhaps may *trample* on these precious *Pearls*; an *Epicurean* may sink them in Voluptuousness; or a *Stoick* may gaze on them with unmeaning Wonder:—but must a *real Christian* be joined to such a Catalogue?—Can *He* hold them at so cheap a Rate?—No: they are * “*dearer unto Him than thousands of Gold and Silver.*”——He esteems them as his richest Inheritance. His “*Lips are fain*” when he speaks of them; and, while he both beholds and enjoys

* Psa. cxix. 72.

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enjoys them, his enraptured Heart melts with Gratitude, Delight, and Praise.

Let us now further consider, how peculiarly Religion contributes to the real Pleasure of Life, by regulating the depraved Mind, and subduing its inordinate Affections.

The *Slaves of Passion*, whose Lives are exhausted in a fatal Round of Luxury and Licentiousness, have ever the Misfortune of blasting their own Designs.—For tho' they are generally engaged in an anxious Pursuit of Pleasures, yet in Reality they find none to enjoy. Their Thirst after them, tho' seemingly insatiable, is soon satisfied; the Appetite, by Indulgence, palls and languishes away; Possession mocks the disappointed Idea; and the certain Conclusion is—*Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*.—But Religion, which
wisely

wisely restrains our impetuous Lusts, and utterly disavows all sordid and unmanly Gratifications, (those baneful Appearances of mistaken Pleasure) supplies the Mind with a perpetual Fund of Happiness. She teaches us how to confine our Affections and Aversions, Hopes and Fears, Joys and Sorrows, within the Limits of Reason; and is the best Security against all those restless and corroding Anxieties, which are inseparable from Vice. 'Tis she instructs us in that pleasing, and no less beneficial Employment of refining our polluted Nature, and healing those dangerous Wounds that we received from the *Fall*. And 'tis she alone that not only guards us from all sinful Temptations, and breaks off our Attachment to the destructive, short-lived Pleasures of Sense, (Pleasures that are lost in the tumultuous Ravishment of a Moment) but also fits us for

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the Enjoyment of such as are durable,—
rational,—divine.

— Indeed the very *Nature* of Religion proclaims her own superior Excellence. What an agreeable and lovely Train of *Virtues* are her constant Attendants! Such are *Temperance*, *Meekness*, *Patience*, and *Charity*. These are some of the most laudable Kind, and indissolubly connected with her. How calm and tranquil must be the Mind that is influenced by These! How serene and undisturbed the Breast that They inhabit! Is it not a Paradise in itself? a Paradise which no Storm can ruffle, no melancholy Gloom invade?—Yes; the Man of sound Principles (such as Religion only can inspire) who maintains a proper Government over himself, and keeps the Balance of his Affections steady and even, enjoys that sedate and
solid

solid Happiness which nothing can rob him of. His Pleasures flow all from *within*; a pure and placid Stream, not to be interrupted either by the Perfidiousness of Men, or the Caprice of Fortune. He has no Need to seek abroad for Enjoyment, for he always carries it in his own Bosom.—He enjoys the real Possession of *Himself*.—He has an approving Mind that disdains all foreign Amusements:—that wants no borrowed Aid:—that has Pleasures of its own which never existed in an opposite Character;—Pleasures that, unlike all others, cannot, by being gratified, satiate or lose their Relish:—Nay, they are heightened by every Repetition, and grow stronger, and stronger still with every rising Day.

But further; it is highly worthy to be observed, that Religion is yet more eminently productive of true Pleasure and

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Happiness, as it comprehends a sincere PIETY, and chearful OBEDIENCE to Almighty God.—THESE are *Wisdom's* best and noblest Companions thro' every Stage of Life: a Life, (tho' in itself short and precarious) the Joys of which are rendered substantial, and its Fruits permanent by *These*. They augment all its Pleasures, and sooth all its Pains. They give the sweetest Relish to Prosperity, and, like faithful Friends, forsake us not, but cleave the more closely to us in the Day of Adversity.

If there is any such Jewel as Happiness to be possessed on Earth, it surely belongs to Those Persons who are rich in Godliness, and fruitful in good Works:—Who devote themselves, in all the various Acts of Holiness and Obedience, to their adorable Maker, and live under an habitual Sense of his paternal Love.

These

—*These* are the *happy People*, and real, Heart-felt Pleasure is all their own; for They * “*have the Lord for their God.*”

—By *Them* the gladsome Hours are *essentially enjoyed*. Time never becomes burthenfome or tedious; but, being principally engaged in the Pursuit of Virtue, and dedicated to the Service of the Lord, revolves in one constant Round of Blifs.

Here may I be allowed particularly to take Notice, how truly *pleasant*, tho' perhaps *unenvied* a Practice it is (and such as is peculiar to Men of *this* Character) to discourage the Folly of *common Visits*, and shun the Impertinencies of *vain Conversation*, that they may be at Leisure to entertain more exalted Ideas, and attend to a Set of nobler Employments! It is *Their* Happiness to prove that the Sweets

H h 3

of

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of Self-Communion, are incomparably preferable to all the fantastic Gaieties of Life, or the flimsy Amusement of *idle Tales*.—*Solitude* has Charms for *Them* which the *jovial Companion* knows nothing of: such as he can neither relish, nor conceive. *This* is a Place of Refuge and Improvement too.—It is a *Refuge* from that busy Swarm of Temptations, which continually infest the public Theatre of the World; and an *Improvement* to all the Graces of Religion.—Here the Soul re-collects her scattered Powers, and renews her wonted Vigor:—Here she defaces every wrong Impression, and sets a fresh Stamp on all her laudable Purposes.—More especially do the Sons of Wisdom embrace *this* Opportunity of cultivating a Correspondence with their divine Friend; the wisest and best of all Beings; their Saviour, and their God.—Here they are at Liberty to
communicate

communicate all their Necessities; to disburthen all their Grievs; and to pour out their alternate Petitions, Praises, and Thanksgivings, into his indulgent Ear.

Say, ye faithful Votaries of Religion, ye sincere Lovers of Righteousness, (for none but *you* can tell) what a delightful Exercise it is to be thus employed in the Service of your God! Whether, wafting up your winged Thoughts to Heaven in fervent *Prayer*, ye feel an ingenuous Compunction of Heart, and melt into a penitential Sorrow for your Ingratitude to the best of Friends; forming at the same Time Purposes of future Obedience, under the Direction of that Grace which you implore: or, devoutly contemplating the Beauties of the eternal Godhead, and opening all the Faculties of your Minds to the Brightness of his Glory, ye celebrate his blessed Name in the be-

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coming Raptures of *Praise*: or, reflecting
on his boundless and disinterested Muni-
ficence, and considering that He is the
Author of your Life, and of every Com-
fort that you receive, ye give Vent to
the Fullness of your grateful Souls, and
thank him for all his Mercies;—say, is
there any Pleasure on Earth that can
stand in Competition with that which *you*
experience, when thus divinely engaged?
Is not *This* that † “*Righteousness, and*
“*Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost,*” which
the whole Universe can neither bestow,
nor deprive you of? Can any Thing
possibly convey a more absolute Satis-
faction to the Heart of Man, a more sub-
lime Pleasure to the most delicate Per-
ceptions of human Sense, than such Ex-
ercises as these?——Say, are not such
Ways the *Ways of Pleasantness*, and all
such Paths the *Paths of Peace*?

This

† Rom. xiv. 17.

This Subject will yet appear in a stronger Light, by considering, that, as Wisdom is conducive to the Happiness of Life, from acquainting us with the Attributes of God; presiding over the Passions; and directing us in the Ways of Piety and Obedience; so does she infallibly produce the most pleasing Serenity, and perfect Satisfaction to the Mind, as being inseparably attended with a GOOD CONSCIENCE.—THIS is that calm and unclouded Sunshine of the Soul, which brightens every earthly Scene:—that rich and pleasant Cordial, which never surfeits, nor palls upon the Sense, but adds to all the Sweets of Life, and sweetens all its Bitters:—that *Murus æneus*, or, *brazen Wall*, which is Proof against all Storms, and impregnable to all Attacks:——It is that inward Witness which defies all Accusers:—that true domestic Friend, that flinches in no Adversity,

versity, deserts us in no Distress, but undauntedly sustains all Difficulties, and nobly triumphs over all Temptations.

Happy, thrice happy is the Man, who can attend without Prejudice to the Suggestions of his own Conscience; plead with Fidelity, and without Evasion, at this important Bar, and be acquitted with Approbation and Applause! This is He, who, by making it his main Study to please GOD, never fails to administer the greatest Pleasure to HIMSELF. He can confidently join the exulting Apostle, and say, * “ *OUR Rejoicing is This; the*
 “ *Testimony of our Conscience, that in Sim-*
 “ *plicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly*
 “ *Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have*
 “ *had our Conversation in the World :*” A Joy, far superior to every sensual Gratification, and such as will be sure to stick
 by

* 2 Cor. i. 12.

by us when all other Comforts fail!—
Such a one has all the Requisites of true
Felicity that Man can have.—Be it our
Care to copy his Virtues, and we shall
certainly enjoy his Happiness! We shall
be able, in such a Case, to review our
past Conduct with a rational Satisfaction;
to possess our *present* State in the most
pleasing Tranquillity, and to look into
Futurity with the most exalted Hopes.

How grateful is the Remembrance of
a *past* well-conducted Life! What a sen-
sible Comfort does it bestow! How truly
satisfactory is it to reflect, that, in general,
we have acted up to the *Reason* of Men,
and the *Grace* of Christians! that we have
supported the Dignity of both these Cha-
racters! that we have preserved a *Con-*
science void of Offence towards God, and
our Neighbour too! that it has been our
great Aim how to please the one, and do
good

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good to the other! and that as often as, thro' the Infirmities of our Nature, we have offended either, we have as often endeavored to repair the Breach, by an hearty Repentance, and a suitable Restitution!

An approving Conscience is also sure of being accompanied with *present* Tranquillity and Delight. It is *This*, under the Patronage of that divine Wisdom by which it is maintained, that invites the blessed Spirit of Love, Joy, and Peace, to make our Souls his perpetual Residence. And what a happy Condition is this! It is indeed such as can be conceived only by Those who experience it. When we are cordially inclined to regard all the Dispensations of Heaven with a becoming Veneration; to revere and admire the wonderful Perfections of God; to subdue our own head-strong Passions;

Passions; and with a pious Awe to observe his Statutes; when thus *we have His Spirit testifying with our Spirits that we are his Offspring*; then have we good Authority to pronounce *how joyful and pleasant a Thing it is to be godly*!—What can possibly be more so than to live under a constant Persuasion of God's peculiar Love? than to be convinced that we are every Day and Night we breathe engaging the Friendship of this most merciful Benefactor? that what we are just now doing is highly pleasing to his gracious Majesty? that *such, or such an Action* is an additional Proof of our Inclination to serve him? and that each Repetition of it is at once an *Improvement* of our *temporal*, as well as the *Condition* of our *eternal* Felicity?—What is *This* but being situated on the very Borders of Heaven itself? What but anticipating the Blessedness to which we aspire?

Lastly: —

Lastly: the Hopes of being made Partakers of this Blessedness in a *future World*, arise from an Acquaintance with that Religion I am recommending, and which render it a delightful Institution in the completest Sense.——Observe the Apostle's Assertion to this Purpose: † “ *Godliness, is profitable unto all Things; “ having Promise of the Life that now is, “ and of that which is to come.*” Piety, or true Religion, is not only the surest Friend to our secular Interests; not only the Promoter of our Joys, and the Soother of our Distresses, in the present perishing Life, but (which is by far the greatest imaginable Comfort belonging to Christianity) it qualifies us for Admission into *That Life* which shall have no Period; where there are Joys as durable as the Nature, and unlimited as the Ideas of our immortal Souls.

Gracious

† 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Gracious God! what must the real *Fruition* of that Happiness be, the bare *Conception* of which is so transcendently great! so infinitely preferable to all the united Pleasures of Sense!—† “*What is*
 “*Man that Thou art thus mindful of him:*
 “*and the Son of Man that Thou thus re-*
 “*gardest him?*”—What but the Work of thy own Hands, Thou stupendous Artificer! whom thou pleatest, out of thy unexampled Mercy, to crown with such Glory and Honor?

I appeal to you, my beloved Brethren, —you, who are blessed with GRACE, to *ponder these Things*;—for the Testimony of your own Sentiments. Whenever you consider yourselves as Beings designed for Immortality! (as I hope you often do) whenever you reflect, that the Happiness which you here enjoy, shall
 not

† Psa. viii. 4.

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 not terminate with terrestrial Things, but
 be for ever established, and inconceiv-
 ably improved in the yet unknown Re-
 gions of Futurity; § “ *do not your Hearts,*”
 like the Disciples’, then “ *burn within*
 “ *you,*” and exult with those holy Rap-
 tures that are peculiar to the Life of
 Saints, whenever you meditate on the
 following sublime Passages? * “ *I am the*
 “ *Resurrection and the Life;*” (saith the
 Lord) “ *He that believeth in Me, tho’ he*
 “ *were dead, yet shall he live: And who so-*
 “ *ever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never*
 “ *die:—*† “ *I know that my Redeemer*
 “ *liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter*
 “ *Day upon the Earth; and tho’ after my*
 “ *Skin Worms destroy this Body, yet in my*
 “ *Flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see*
 “ *for myself, and mine Eyes shall behold,*
 “ *and not another:—*—† “ *When this*
 “ *earthly*

Luke xxiv. 32.

* John xi. 25, 26. † Job xix, 25, 26, 27.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 1.

“ *earthly Tabernacle is dissolved, I have a*
 “ *Building of God; an House not made with*
 “ *Hands, eternal in the Heavens:*”——

§ “ *Henceforth there is laid up for Me a*
 “ *Crown of Righteousness; which the Lord,*
 “ *the righteous Judge, shall give me at that*
 “ *Day:*”——And then shall I hear those

reviving Words pronounced by the
 Judge, in the Presence of God, and as-
 sembled Angels;—* “ *Well done, thou good*
 “ *and faithful Servant, enter thou into the*
 “ *Joy of thy Lord!*”——Whenever, I say,

you recognize such Passages as these, are
 not your Senses ravished with that grand
 and delightful Prospect, which the Be-
 lief of an happy Eternity affords? Do ye
 not even *now* enjoy an Antepast of those
 true Pleasures,—those permanent Streams
 of Bliss that flow fast by the Throne of
 God? And can you forbear crying out,
 —“ These extatic Joys, O sacred WIS-

I i “ DOM!

§ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

* Mat. xxv. 21.

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“DOM! These substantial Comforts
“and Delights are all thy own! THINE
“truly are the *Ways of Pleasantness*,
“THINE only are the *Paths of Peace!*”

In such a State as this,—need I ask?—
can any the most dismal Clouds of *Adversity*, (which, while we continue *here*, we must expect will hang over the Righteous as well as the Wicked)—can any *transient Affliction*,—can any gloomy Prospect of *Disease*,—nay, can *Death* itself obscure (much less can it extinguish) that clear and continued Day-Light of the Mind, which reflects from every Point of it the Rays of divine Hope;—even the Hope of everlasting Glory, and an *eternal Recompence of Reward*,—the Hope of a final Deliverance, and Acceptance with God? No: So long as we tread the Paths of *Wisdom*, and pursue the Road that *Christianity* points out, we shall be enabled to
affuage

allwage every Pain, and subdue the Virulence of every Calamity. Life and Immortality, to which the Trials of this State only help to pave the Way, will represent all Contingencies in bright Colors. Our Confidence in God, our Faith in Christ, and thereby our Hope of future Salvation, will disarm every Affliction of its Power, and make us superior to all the Sorrows of a fleeting World. So that we may well join with St. Peter in that fine Ascription of Praise to the Almighty;

* “ *Blessed be the God and Father of our*
 “ *Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to*
 “ *his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us*
 “ *again unto a lively Hope, by the Resur-*
 “ *rection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to*
 “ *an Inheritance incorruptible, and unde-*
 “ *filed, and that fadeth not away, reserved*
 “ *in Heaven for us!*” Or with that undaunted and more celebrated Hero,

I i 2

(and

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(and which is perhaps more applicable
to my present Purpose) * “ *Who shall se-*
“ *parate us from the Love of Christ? Shall*
“ *Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution,*
“ *or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or*
“ *Sword?—Nay, in all these Things we are*
“ *more than Conquerors thro’ Him that*
“ *loved us.*”

What remains now, my Brethren, but
that we admonish, exhort, and, by EX-
AMPLE, encourage one another to lead
pious and conscientious Lives? This is
the best Deduction that can be made
from the preceding Meditations. We
have been treating on a delightful as well
as interesting Subject. Let us zealously
endeavor to prove, that we consider it
in both those engaging Lights, by a re-
ligious Behaviour. Let us strive to ob-
tain this illustrious Endowment, referred
to

* Rom. viii. 35, 37.

to in the Text, by an habitual Cultivation of our own Reason, an unremitted Guard over our deceitful Hearts, a sedulous Perusal of that blessed Book, the Bible, and, particularly, a correspondent Practice. Let us thus exert every human Faculty, to acquire that Wisdom which cannot fail to attract the Favor of God, and secure his everlasting Love; that Wisdom which is no less than a radiant Efflux of his own; which bears the nearest Resemblance of his divine Nature; and which, we may depend upon it, will shine with us when all other worldly Attainments are lost in Obscurity.—Finally, and principally, let us implore the *Holy Spirit* of God, that original Fountain of all Knowledge, and of all Goodness, that He would be pleased to shed the Light of his divine Grace upon our Souls, and illuminate our dark Understandings; that He would

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disentangle our Affections from the false
Pleasures of this World, and inflame our
Hearts with an ardent Love for the next;
and that He would enable us, before we
enter upon *that* State, (as we soon cer-
tainly must) seriously to consider, that
there is nothing in *this* worthy of our
Anxiety; nothing that deserves our So-
licitude to acquire, but an actual Sen-
sation of that *Pleasantness* which proceeds
from an upright Mind, and of that *Peace*
which is derived from God alone, and
“ which passeth all Understanding;”—
in short, nothing but his special Grace
to incline us to repent of every past Sin
and Folly, and to direct all our future
Steps in the Paths of Innocence, Virtue,
Piety;—to prevail with us to strive, by
every possible Method, to please our gra-
cious Maker and Redeemer, and, thro’
his infinite Merits, to save *that Part* of
us,

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us,—that far nobler and inexpressibly superior Part,—which shall live for ever.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, Glory, and Praise, &c. Amen.

SER-

Set XVI of RELIGION 487

us—that far nobler and inexplicably
superior Part—which shall live for ever.

Now to God the Father, Son and Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, Glory,
and Praise, &c. Amen.

SEER

S E R M O N XVII.

Motives for alienating our Affections
from this World, and fixing them
on the next,

COLOSS. iii. 2.

*Set your Affections on Things above, not on
Things on the Earth.*

S E R M O N XVII.

Motives for alienating our Affections
from this World and fixing them
on the next



Coloss. iii. 2.

Set your Affections on Things above, not on
Things on the Earth.

S E R M O N XVII.
Motives for alienating our Affections, &c.

C O L O S S. iii. 2.

SET YOUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS
ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE
EARTH.

EXCELLENT Admonition! and worthy of the Mouth that spoke it! And tho' it is here immediately directed to a People whose late Reception of Christianity had induced the Apostle to write this Epistle, (being tenderly zealous for the Growth of that Religion which his Disciple *Epaphras* had planted amongst them) yet it extends with the utmost Propriety to the whole human Race: to all who profess themselves Heirs of Immortality, and Candidates for a better Life.

It

It is a Truth universally received, and too often, alas! fatally experienced, that earthly Objects have a natural and very powerful Ascendency over the Heart of Man.——They mislead the Judgement, usurp over the Affection, and infatuate the Will.—*Pleasure, Pride, or Interest*, wait at every Avenue; and which Path soever we take, the Inchanter is sure to follow. Add to this the bewitching Influence of *popular Mode*. How many of our Fellow-Creatures do we see hastening to certain Ruin along the slippery Road of Vice, from their being first betrayed into it out of mere Complaisance, perhaps to some *well-bred Libertine*, for the Sake of mimicking the Great, or fashionably joining with the Prophane! And when we further reflect on the Treachery of our own Inclinations, how prone we are, like Rebels, to desert the Cause of God and his Religion, and listen to

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to the various and importunate Solicitations of our spiritual Adversary, we ought gratefully to acknowledge that this affectionate Caution of St. Paul will ever claim our Attention, and require our strictest Vigilance, and most steady Resolution to comply with it.

Fervent in my Endeavors to prevent your too close an Attachment to the Things of the present Life, and studious to engage your Thoughts and Affections on the lasting Scene of Futurity, I intend, in this Discourse, to expatiate on the Advice conveyed to us in the Words of the Text; and hope, at once, to vindicate and illustrate, by the most convincing Arguments, the good Intention of the Apostle signified thereby.—I will take the Liberty to reverse the Sentence; and will produce, by divine Assistance, in the

FIRST

FIRST Place, several coercive Reasons for alienating your Affections from earthly Things.

The first Argument to this Purpose, and that a very obvious and substantial one, shall be grounded on that beautiful and expressive Simile in the Book of Job; (viz.) that † “*Man is born unto Trouble, as the Sparks fly upward.*” — The unexampled Author of these Words had a very sensible Feeling of the Truth of what he spoke. He appears indeed to have been marked out by Providence as an eminent Pattern of Patience and Equanimity, under a long Series of the most complicated Distress. But it need not cost us much Time to seek out for particular Instances to verify this melancholy Assertion. “*Man is born unto Trouble,*” is an Expression of a general Meaning, and a Truth of general Extent.

Examine

† Job. v. 7.

Examine the History (either sacred or prophane) of any one Age since the Creation of the World.—What different Scenes of Misery you will find unfolded, upon unquestionable Record!—I forbear to enter into a minute Description. My Mind recoils at the Sound of Rapines, Usurpations, Massacres. How many Millions of unhappy Wretches have been forced reluctant to the dreadful Field of Battle, and there poured out their Lives, while others have erected their idle Trophies, and waded thro' human Blood to worthless Glory!—Review the wicked Reigns of *Nero, Caligula, Domitian*, with several other Roman Emperors. Recollect the numerous Depopulations, the horrid Cruelties that have been committed, to glut the Rage or Ambition of those merciless Tyrants;—Cruelties, such as would make the Iron-hearted *Savage* bleed, or a stupid *Heathen* blush to be reproached

proached with.—But why should I refer your Imagination to distant Periods, with a View to display the Troubles of human Life? The present Age will furnish us with sufficient Proof, that the Seeds of Misery are sown in all Seasons, as well as in all Lands. Observe, for Instance, that Anti-christian Monster of Barbarity, the great Council of *Inquisition*; where innumerable Lives have been condemned to be destroyed by Inches, and which is still authorised in *Spain, Italy*, and other *popish* Dominions.—Hear the Cries of those poor Wretches, extended on the Rack.—Hear them begging for Death, their only Prospect of Relief, inhumanly denied.—See the Privilege of all that is dear to them, their Religion itself, trampled upon, and the Body inflamed to force Conviction into the Soul: as if it were possible for the fixed Principles of Conscience to be eradicated

dedicated by Tortures, or an obscure Dungeon to throw Light into the Mind.— I need not enlarge on the miserable and destructive Consequences of an open War, carried on * at this Day betwixt two of the greatest and most formidable Powers in Europe;—nor on the intestine Broils, Mutinies, and Dissentions, (vilely covered with the Mask of Religion) daily growing and increasing in another unhappy † adjacent Country; where the Cries of tender Matrons, and their little innocent Offspring, imploring for injured Mercy, are sweeter than grateful Sounds of Music to the Ear of the relentless Russian; and where whole Villages are sacked, or totally consumed, by an inhuman Band of *Confederates*.—Nor can I suppose it necessary to remind you that ‡ a late brave and independent People

K k

* Alluding to the War betwixt *Russia* and *Turky*. † Poland.

‡ N. B. This Sermon was wrote soon after the *Corficans* were subdued by the *French*.

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ple, whose Happiness grew apparently
firm and strong, are at Length (after a
painful and noble struggle, in Defence
of their precious Liberty) intirely rooted,
and become deplorably subservient to
the *Gallic* Yoke: Whilst their worthy
and renowned Chief is forced to fly for
Refuge to other Climes.-----I will also
wave a Rehearsal of those *public* Griev-
ances and Commotions so loudly com-
plained of within our own Nation, and
pass on, with Hopes of weaning your Af-
fection from this Valley of Tears, to take
just a cursory View of the common Trou-
bles of *private* Life.

These are such as are not confined to
any particular Sect, or Kingdom, but are
inherent in the very Nature of Mankind.
They are the general Inheritance of Mor-
tality, and, tho' divided into different
Portions, every one has a Share large
enough

enough to embitter all the Sweets on Earth. What Numbers are this Moment laboring under the almost intolerable Burthen of a diseased Body, and dragging on a Life they have been long weary of in a continual Round of Pain!—How many are sinking under the Weight of Poverty and hard Labor!—And how many oppressed with the keener Anguish of the Mind!—But you will fondly object, that this is partially exposing the darkest Side of the human State.—Then tell me where to find the happy Man, who lives free from Pain, and undisturbed with Care and Perplexity. Where shall we find the united Harmony of Health and Peace, beating without a Discord in the same Breast? Where is the tranquil Mind unruffled by any Storms of Passion? Where the sound Heart, that is Proof against all the Stings of Envy, Malice, and Disappointment?—No where on

this Side Heaven. Learning, Power, Ambition, Riches, all connected, cannot produce so rare a Phænomenon. No: They are only gilded Cares, painted Plumes; outwardly fair indeed and dazzling, but pregnant with Pain and Sorrow. Learning is not to be acquired but by wearisome Application, nor possessed without much Anxiety: The Seat of Power is unexceptionably bedecked with Thorns: Ambition is racked with Disappointment: And Riches are soured with Misfortunes, and corroding Fears. And what Solomon observes with Regard to these, may very justly be applied to all the rest;—* “*They make themselves Wings and fly away.*”

But, to set the Folly of fixing our Affection on terrestrial Things in a still stronger Point of Light, let us condescend

to

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

to suppose, that there are a few exceptionable Instances to what I have here advanced in general; that *all* are not so closely encompassed with Difficulties, or so much involved in Troubles as hath been just represented: but that there are some who even enjoy an almost uninterrupted Succession of Delights; who bask in a continual Sunshine of Prosperity, drink largely of this World's enchanting Sweets, and seldom so much as taste the bitter Cup.—This is an extraordinary Concession; but, admitting its Possibility, I would ask,—Can all the Pleasures, Honors, or Advantages, that the World has to bestow, satisfy the Capacity of *intellectual* Beings,—Beings designed for an *eternal State*? Is it not a vain Supposition, that Man, created a reasonable Agent, and endowed with a Soul that is formed capable of enjoying consummate Happiness in another World,

and sent into *this* on Purpose to prepare himself for *that*, should meet with full Satisfaction from any Enjoyments, that a State merely probationary can produce? It is well known that a too eager Pursuit of the good Things of this Life is inseparably attended with Anxiety; and a constant Possession of them soon becomes familiar to the Imagination (which is the Seat of a main Part of our fantastic Happiness below) and sickens on the Sense. So that if we could command all that the Eye can see, or the Heart can wish, we should even then prove, by Experience, that Man, at his best State, is “altogether “Vanity.”—The whole Earth, it cannot but be acknowledged, with all its gay Temptations, offers a wise Man infinitely too little for the Purchase of his Heart. It can never fill the extensive Views of his immortal Spirit. There is nothing it affords commensurate to his grand Ideas.

I would

—I would here guard my Intention from being inadvertently misinterpreted. I would not be supposed to lodge an unjustifiable Complaint against the Condition of human Life: Nor dwell entirely upon enumerating its Infelicities, and be ungratefully forgetful of its daily Benefits. God forbid that I should pretend to arraign the wise Dispensations of Heaven, or dare to depreciate its invaluable Gifts! This terrestrial Scene is checkered with a Diversity of dark and lucid Colors. The bright and obscure are nicely blended together. Cheerfully and with humble Gratitude, do I acknowledge that the Mind of Man is formed susceptible of a thousand grateful Sensations: Whether it glows with the warm Emotions of a sincere Friendship, or is blessed with the fine and tender Feelings of an unlimited Charity: Whether we consider it in the Capacity of a

social, or a solitary Life: Whether it reaps the refined Pleasures of a communicative Benificence, and is rendered happy from the Happiness it delights to bestow, or enjoys a native, genuine Tranquillity, all its own.—But (most thankfully allowing all this) what I would plainly be understood to intimate, is that if we confine our Speculations to *this World only*, we shall find, upon an impartial Estimate, not only that the Evil it produces in general, greatly outweighs the Good, and that the common Sufferings of human Nature, more than overbalance all its Joys; but also that the Imperfection of its happiest State, and its utter Inability of affording its warmest Votaries compleat Satisfaction, is an evident Proof, that it was not created for the Seat of our supreme Felicity, nor designed for the proper Object of our Choice or Affection.

This

This Argument for preventing or breaking off your too passionate Fondness for Things on the Earth, will yet receive very considerable Force, by reflecting that they are founded on a sandy Bottom, are brittle, precarious, and of short Duration.—Single me out a Man, on whom Prosperity has showered all her sweetest Odors:—Let the gay Vision of sublunary Bliss be set off with all the romantic Show that a vain Imagination can give it: Let an overflowing Plenty far surpass the Bounds of Competence, and Pleasure in all its different Dresses crown every smiling Hour: Croud, if you please, into the little Circle of his Life, all the delicate Sensations that Appetite can relish, and Wealth procure:—Then give him, if you can, what is so absolutely and necessarily essential to true Happiness,—a full SECURITY for all this, and I will immediately drop the
Argument,

Argument, acknowledge myself confuted, and from henceforth become an Advocate for the Pleasures of the World.

—But instead of such a Defence, are there not innumerable Circumstances which *may*, and frequently *do*, interpose, and demolish in a Moment the strongest Fabrick of human Blifs? What else are all those Accidents with which Report so often alarms us? And what else the various Disorders that attend our tottering Frame?—But especially,—to say nothing of the common Vicissitudes of Humanity, the alternate Seasons of Clouds and Sunshine, to which every earthly Passenger is perpetually exposed; not to mention the natural Instability of all temporal Enjoyments, which might be copiously enlarged on,—is not a serious Reflexion on the *Shortness* of the present Life alone, a sufficient Motive for disengaging our Affection from all that's mortal?

mortal? If we had in Store an inexhaustible Fund of all the good Things of the Earth amassed together; all that the Tongue can exprefs, or the Heart conceive; were it possible for us to enjoy Pleasure without Pain, Honor without Anxiety, and Riches without Care; and supposing this accumulated Felicity never to be dissolved but with Life itself; (which, according to the very Nature and Constitution of this worldly System, is not to be expected) yet even then we should feel that aching Void in our Happiness, which no Expedient will be ever able to fill up;—i. e. the Want of a secure Title to hold what we possess; for * *“here
“ we have no continuing City.”* † *“We
“ dwell in Houses of Clay, whose Founda-
“ tion is in the Dust, which are crushed
“ before the Moth.”* And, according to that significant Comparison of St. Peter,
“ All

* Heb. xiii. 14.

† Job iv. 19.

† “ *All Flesh is as Grass, and the Glory of
 “ Man as the Flower of Grass. The Grass
 “ withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth
 “ away.*”

There is also another fine and affecting Representation of the Life of Man, exhibited in the fourteenth Chapter of the Book of Job. § “ *He cometh forth
 “ like a Flower, and is cut down; he fleeth
 “ also as a Shadow, and continueth not,*” are most admirable Allusions, and peculiar to the Sublimity of the eastern Style.

For, as a Flower, which for Elegance and Beauty far excels the rest of the inanimate Creation, is either blasted in the Bud, cropped in its full Bloom, or of itself naturally droops and fades away: so Man, who is as much superior to the animal World, in Reason and Knowledge, as a Flower is to the vegetable in Dress and Gaiety, either falls a defenceless Prey to the relentless Hand of Death

in

in his puerile State, after having but just
sipped of the bitter Draught of Life,—
or is cut down in his full Maturity, a-
midst the Strength and Vivacity of Man-
hood,—or, should he grow into the
Winter of his Age, (a Season of Sorrow,
Sickness, and Infirmary) he must at
Length yield to the resistless Power of
Time, and, in Spite of every feeble Ef-
fort to prop him up, wither, decay, and
perish.—“ *He fleeth as a Shadow, and*
“ *contiueth not,*” is also a very applica-
ble Expression to denote the *Velocity* as
well as *Shortness* of our Time here. How
imperceptibly do the winged Hours fly
from us, and, like the airy Motion of a
Shadow, scarce leave so much as a Foot-
step that we can trace behind! Astonish-
ing Consideration! that in the Space of
sixty, seventy, or eighty Years, we find
it impossible to give a distinct Relation of
the Actions of a single Month.—Thus
fleet

fleet and perishing is that vain Life, from the flattering Charms of which I am endeavoring to divert your Affection.— Did not experience too clearly prove the great Necessity of Admonition, it would be an Indignity to your Understanding to remind you, that you must soon take a final Leave of all that you see upon Earth; and consequently to your Discretion too to warn you not to fix your Hearts on what will shortly be no more. Notwithstanding all the vain Arguments that can possibly be collected in Favor of the World, and its false, alluring Joys, this is an incontestible Truth, —that it is every Moment hastening to Diffolution. You cannot therefore honor it with a Share in your Esteem, beyond its Desert, without dishonoring the Excellency of your Nature, and destroying the very End and Purpose for which

which you were introduced upon the Stage of Life.

And this is by far the strongest and most important Dissuasive from setting your Affection on Things on the Earth, of any, or indeed all, that has been yet recommended to your Consideration.— For, tho' I am far from insisting on a fullen Sequestration, either from necessary Business, or lawful Pleasure, (the one being a Duty in itself, and the other an innocent Relaxer of the Mind) yet it is certain, that an ardent Pursuit after the blandishing Allurements of this perishing World, is utterly inconsistent with that pure, steady, serene Love of God, which is seated in the Heart, and regulates the Life of every good Christian.— Nor can we have any Plea to offer in Behalf of transient Gratifications, if we credit

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credit the Declaration of an inspired
Author, that * "*if any Man love the World,*
the Love of the Father is not in him."—
By adhering to the former, the devout
Service of the latter is unavoidably neg-
lected. Their very Nature is not perhaps
more opposite than their Interests. For
we are commanded by our great Sove-
reign, to resist and subdue all those for-
midable Forces, with which the World
is empowered to try our spiritual Valor.
Every Lust, instead of enslaving, should
be resolutely enslaved, and every Temp-
tation, instead of conquering, should
be victoriously put to Rout.—Nay, the
Voice of Reason alone, was it duly at-
tended to, would lay upon us the same
Restraint with the divine Authority.—
That excellent Monitor would kindly
suggest to us the Impossibility of loving
both God and Mammon; of serving two
Masters

Ser. XVII.] *our Affections, &c.* 513

Masters truly and faithfully; or, in other Words, of reconciling our heavenly Expectations with an immoderate Affection for Things on the Earth.—But surely it cannot be necessary to dwell any longer on this Side of the Argument. I hasten,

SECONDLY, to lay before you the principal Admonition of the Apostle, in the Text; viz. that you “*set your Affections on Things above.*”

Indeed I have already, in some Degree, anticipated my own Intention. For, the Reasons which I have just offered for abstracting your Affections from the poisonous Sweets of this Life, are also strong Incitements for fixing them on the real Joys of another.—If the happiest state on Earth is intermixed with Troubles, Cares, and Infirmities; is not this a sufficient Reason for extending your Ideas

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to

to those bright and serene Climes that are never obscured with the Clouds of Pain, Guilt, or Sorrow?—If your choicest Pleasures here are defective and unsatisfying, is not this a very powerful Persuasive for placing your highest Regard where there is Perfection of Joy, and Fullness of Bliss?—If you are convinced that the best Portion belonging to Mortality must waste, and be of short Continuance; should not this incline you to thirst after those Rivers of Pleasure, which will for ever flow at the right Hand of God?—And if a too fond Attachment to the present World, be irreconcilable with the Hope that is set before you in a blessed Futurity, should you not heartily despise all earthly Temptations, as insinuating Traitors, which offer in Hand a few glittering Gewgaws, at the Expence of all that Immortality holds dear?

Whenever,

Whenever, by a secret Anticipation, we indulge our Thoughts with the Happiness of another World; when we meditate on those resplendent Glories which shall be hereafter revealed, and which God, out of his pure Mercy, has promised to all who love him; considering at the same Time, that a settled Affection for transitory Enjoyments, is totally incompatible with the Hopes of reaping eternal; in what a contemptible Light must every Object around us appear! In a comparative View with Eternity, how must all that we see and enjoy shrink into nothing!

Tho' the best Description that can be given of the rapturous Joys above, is to confess that they are not to be described by any human Pen, yet the Nature of them is so far explained to us by *Revelation*, as may abundantly suffice to en-

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flame our Wishes, and excite our Endeavors for obtaining them. By Virtue of *that* grand Discovery, we are assured, that the coelestial Inheritance is a direct Contrast to this frail, imperfect, momentary State: that it is * "*an Inheritance*" *incorruptible, and undefiled, and that*" *fadeth not away.*" We shall not in the *new Jerusalem*, be subject to the arbitrary Laws of Mortality and Corruption, but by a firm and indissoluble Tenure for ever hold what we are once admitted to possess. There too our Bliss will be uninterrupted and compleat. Pain and Sorrow are entire Strangers, and Imperfection has no Name there.—The heavenly Mansions are also kept clear of all Defilement. Sin and Folly can obtain no Admission. There is no Room for an impure Inhabitant. All is immaculate Holiness, and unblemished Honor—

There,

* 2 Pet. i. 4.

There, in short, our Pleasures will satisfy, yet not cloy; our Glory be at the Height, yet not diminish; our Happiness be full and perfect, yet never decay. And, which crowns all that can possibly be conceived or imagined of the most extatic and consummate Felicity, is, that we “*shall see God, and shall ever be with the Lord;*”—we shall be blessed with the clear Vision, and transcendently glorious Enjoyment of God in Christ thro’ endless and immortal Ages.

For Heaven’s Sake then, my Brethren, and for the Sake of all that is truly and essentially valuable, your own precious Souls, resolve, with God’s assisting and preventing Grace, where to place your most sanguine Wishes and Affections. If you call yourselves rational Men; if you profess yourselves faithful Adherents to Christianity; do not violate either

one or the other 'of these exalted Characters, by a sordid Attachment to the Vanities of this Life, and a stupid Indifference to the solid and lasting Joys of the other. *Mammon*, remember, is a dangerous and subtle Thief, that with a *Siren-Aspect*, would steal away all your Happiness, and with a few fallacious, short-lived Pleasures, falsely called substantial, bribe you into irretrievable Ruin. But do not, for God's Sake, do not expect to find substantial Pleasure where no substantial Pleasure ever *did*, or ever *can* reside.—Pardon the Warmth of my Expression.—It cannot possibly be equal to that affectionate Concern and Regard which I constantly maintain for your everlasting Welfare.—Consider, *Eternity is just now* at the Stake, and you have no Security for one future Moment of your Lives. The *very next* may be your *last*, and prove decisive of all that

is

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is worth living for.—Such a Reflexion as this justifies the most zealous Admonition, and calls for all that the Tongue can utter, or Pen prescribe. When immortal Glories are in View on the one Side, and endless Miseries on the other, and both inconceivably great,—Indifference is Madness, and the most fervent Zeal the truest Wisdom. If to gain an absolute Possession and Security of as much Happiness as the Soul of Man is formed capable of enjoying deserves not your greatest Care, and if to avoid as much Misery as an incensed God may justly inflict requires not your utmost Caution,—then farewell to all Distinction betwixt Right and Wrong!——human Reason, Understanding, Judgment, nay Christianity too are all Shadows; they are Sounds that have no Meaning, and Names that have no Reality.

Lastly, take Care to remember, and be ever diligent to implore the Aid of the holy Spirit to enable you to fulfil, the *Conditions* required, in order to the obtaining of your eternal Salvation. Certainly, it is “*by Grace that ye shall be saved, thro’ Faith,*”—thro’ the infinite Mercies of God in our Lord Jesus Christ: but consider that *Love* and *Obedience* are the Terms on which you must be made Partakers of the everlasting Covenant. For * “*Christ is the Author of Salvation only “to them that obey him:*” May this sacred and infallible Memorandum be imprinted in standing Characters upon your Minds, and induce you to behave like the dutiful Children of God!—May that dreadfully pleasing Thought, ETERNITY, the Uncertainty of the Time when you must enter upon it, and the certain Nearness of its Approach, prevail,

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vail with you to be always upon the Guard, and regulate all your Words and Actions!—And may the infinite Disproportion there is between the Pains and Enjoyments of this World, and those of the next, incite you to fix your most earnest, steady, and unalterable “*Affec-
“ tion on Things above, not on Things on
“ the Earth!*”——Then, my beloved Brethren, whenever that momentous Period shall arrive, which will disperse all the fleeting Images that here dance before your Eyes, and summon you to the Bar of infinite Mercy and Justice, you shall be there tried and acquitted with Honor before Men and Angels; and, after that, received “*into the Joy of your Lord,*”——into that glorious, but yet unknown State, where every Thing will concur to satisfy your Wishes, and compleat your Bliss.

And

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And this I pray God grant, for the
Sake, and thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ
our Saviour. Amen.

And may
portion there is between the pains and
Enjoyments of this World, and those of
the next, incite you to be your most
earnest, steady, and unalterable
“*then on Things above, not on Things on*
“*the Earth*.”—Then, my beloved
Brethren, whenever that momentous Pe-
ried shall arrive, which will disperse all
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into that glorious, but yet unknown
State, where every Thing will concur to
satisfy your Wishes, and complete your

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And

S E R M O N XVIII.

A wicked Course of Life the severest
Sting of Death.

1 COR. XV. 54, 55, 56, 57.

*Death is swallowed up in Victory. O Death,
where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is
thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin,
and the Strength of Sin is the Law. But
Thanks be to God, which giveth us the
Victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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S E R M O N XVIII.

*A wicked Course of Life the severest Sting of
Death.*

1 C O R. XV. 54, 55, 56, 57.

DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING?

O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?

THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, AND

THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW.

BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHICH

GIVETH US THE VICTORY THRO' OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THE principal Design of the Apostle
in this admirable Chapter, is to prove
the Certainty of a general Resurrection,
with the Immortality of the Soul.—
These are necessarily connected, and both
clearly demonstrable from the Refur-
rection of our blessed Lord.—All most
imporatnt

important Realities! which should be rivetted to the Heart, and engage the closest Attention.—The State of Man beyond the Grave, and in what Character he is to appear after his Transition from the present Scene of Things, is a Consideration of the deepest Concern. The Reality of such a State our Religion fully proves, tho' Death alone can unveil the Prospect.—The Gospel has filled our Ideas with that *Life and Immortality*, which no other History in the World could ever have brought to Light. The *contemplative Pagan* was bewildered in his Researches, and the *subtle Philosopher* baffled in his most profound Speculations concerning a Resurrection to eternal Life. But *Christ* hath thrown a clear and sufficient Light on the Truth of this momentous Article. He hath assured us, that there is an endless Duration of Happiness appointed for the Righteous,

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as well as Misery for the Wicked, in another World: And he hath also plainly pointed out the different Paths that lead to them. He hath not only himself unbarred the Gates of the Grave, but hath declared, by his unerring Penman, that He is † “*the first Fruits of them that sleep:*” That ‡ “*since by Man came Death, by Man*” “*came also the Resurrection of the Dead:*” That § “*as in Adam all die, even so in*” “*Christ shall all be made alive:*” And again, that * “*this corruptible must put on*” “*Incorruption, and this mortal must put*” “*on Immortality.*”

If we depend upon the Testimony of these Assertions; if we stedfastly believe that after Death we shall rise again to *Life*; that *that* Life shall be both *happy* and *eternal*; and that the Son of God himself, our meritorious Advocate, hath
first

† 1 Cor. xv. 20.

‡ Ver. 21.

§ Ver. 22.

Ver. 53.

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first paved the Way to it,—what weighty Reasons we have to join with the Apostle in his triumphant Exclamation!—

“ *Death is swallowed up in Victory. O*

“ *Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave,*

“ *where is thy Victory?*” Just as if He had

said, *Then* (when Mortality is swallowed up of Life) shall the Power ye now have be totally subdued, and ye shall have lost all your Venom.—Yet, after a seeming

Pause, he proceeds, and says, “ *The Sting*

“ *of Death is Sin; and the Strength of Sin*

“ *is the Law.*” That is, the most for-

midable Weapon with which Death is armed, is Sin; and that which gives Strength to Sin, is the Law; because *this* prohibits all Manner of Vice, by which Guilt is incurred.—“ *But Thanks*

“ *be to God, which giveth us the Victory thro’*

“ *our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Or, Thanks

be to the all-powerful and most merciful God, who, by what our adorable

Redeemer

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Redeemer hath done for us, hath crowned us with a compleat Conquest over Sin and Death: So that by Faith in Him, and upon true Repentance for our Iniquities, we shall prove Death to be no more than a necessary Passage out of this Life to a happy Immortality.

From the Words of the Text, thus explained, the following Considerations are evidently deducible:

1. That, tho' there is a natural Fear of dying impressed on the Mind of every human Being, yet the most powerful Dread of Death is that only which is occasioned by a vicious Course of Life; this entailing Guilt upon us by the Breach of the Law. But

2. That our Lord Jesus Christ, through the infinite Mercy of the most high God,

M m

hath

hath obtained a Victory for us over *Sin* and *Death*; and this it is our Duty to express in the sincerest Sentiments of Gratitude and Thanksgiving.

1. Let us consider, That, tho' there is a natural Fear of dying impressed on the Mind of every human Being, yet the most powerful Dread of Death is that only which is occasioned by a vicious Course of Life; this entailing Guilt upon us by the Breach of the Law.

Fear in general is one of the strongest Passions of the Soul. And perhaps it is never so much excited in any Instance belonging to *Mortality*, as by the Apprehension of *being mortal*. This great Business of dying, and of entering upon another State, when every other Business in this shall cease, is a Thought that requires the firmest Resolution. It eclipses
all

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all earthly Splendor, and throws a Shade over the brightest Hours of Sunshine and Prosperity. A sacred Writer, almost as famous for the Elegance of his Language, as the Integrity of his Heart, styles Death * "*the King of Terrors.*" It must be confessed, that even the virtuous and the penitent are apt to shudder at the Approaches of this awful Messenger. They cannot,—as being subject to human Frailty,—but feel a trembling Dread, an inward Consternation, whenever they reflect on their own Mortality. That irrevocable Sentence passed upon all the human Race "*Dust thou art, and unto* "*Dust shalt thou return,*" seems sufficient to stagger the most heroic Virtue.

But the Dread I am now speaking of, and even the actual Pains which commonly attend a Dissolution of the Soul

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from

from the Body, will be greatly allayed, and made infinitely more tolerable, by a steady Confidence in God, and an ideal Prospect of Happiness in a future World. The holy Writings furnish us with several Examples of Men so unconquerable in their Resolution, and so fixed in their religious Principles, blessed with so noble a Fortitude, and so lively a Faith in their dying Redeemer, that no Dangers, Hardships, nor Terrors,—not Death itself could shake that true Peace, and Tranquillity of Mind, which they had so strongly established. I will not trespass on your Attention by reciting particular Instances. It would only be reminding you of Facts with which you are already acquainted, to mention the magnanimous Conduct of the *Patriarchs, Prophets, Saints, and Apostles*; how many of those noble Followers of Virtue, those intrepid Sons of God, exulted in the Midst of Tortures, and
braved

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 braved the Face of Death. *These* are
They, who,—once harrassed with bitter
 and undeserved Cruelties, exposed to
 merciless Persecutions, and basely trod-
 den under-Foot of wicked Men, * “*shine*
 “*forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their*
 “*Father.*” Yes, and so shall all Chris-
 tian Believers, who endeavor, like Them,
 to lead CHRISTIAN LIVES.—
 For, † “*the Souls of the Righteous,*” says
 that eminent Book of Wisdom, (which
 indeed might well be styled *canonical*)
 “*are in the Hand of God, and there shall*
 “*no Torment touch them. In the Sight of*
 “*the unwise they seemed to die: and their*
 “*Departure is taken for Misery, and their*
 “*going from us to be utter Destruction:*
 “*But they are in Peace. For tho’ they be*
 “*punished in the Sight of Men, yet is their*
 “*Hope full of Immortality.*” Let ‡ “*Fools*
 “*account their Life Madness; and their*

M m 3

“ End

* Mat. xiii. 43. † Wisdom iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. ‡ Wisdom v. 4, 5.

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“ End to be without Honor.” But they shall be “ numbered among the Children of “ God, and their Lot shall be among “ Saints.” Then § “ shall they receive a “ glorious Kingdom, and a beautiful Crown “ from the Lord’s Hand : for with his right “ Hand shall he cover them, and with his “ Arm shall he protect them.”

If we now turn our Reflexions to the State of the Wicked, we shall find a very different Scene unfolded. The prosperous, but infatuated *Worlding*, whose Time is engrossed in ministering to his Sensualities, or concerting Measures for advancing his Fortune, and ennobling his Fame, has no such desirable Prospect. On the contrary, how alarming, how inexpressibly dreadful must the Summons of Death be to a Wretch of this unhappy Stamp!—See the poor Mortal trembling
under

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under the relentless Tyrant's leaden Hand!—Say, ye his gay Confederates in Vice! have ye any Expedients *now* to offer, any Remedies to prescribe, that may mitigate his Pain, or lighten the Burthen of a Mind laden with Guilt?—Alas! your Efforts are all ineffectual: your very Presence is an Aggravation to his Distress. For it serves but to torture his Memory with the Commission of those forbidden Irregularities, which are the Foundation of his Ruin, and exclude the Favor of that Being, whose *Comforts* only *can refresh the Soul*.—Never was that tragical Conclusion insisted on by *Solomon*, with Regard to all human Felicity, more manifestly represented than in such a Scene as this, viz. that “*all is* “*Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.*”—Ah! what else are all those idle Amusements he once doated on, and that now forsake him?—What else those intoxicating

M m 4

Pleasures,

Pleasures, that are now his Bane and Averfion?—And what now avail those Possessions he has been fo industrious in accumulating, or that Fame he has been fo anxious to propagate? Alas! the former cannot *profit in the Day of God's Wrath*, and the latter is but a Breath of Air. * “ *For he fhall carry nothing away* “ *with him when he dieth: neither fhall his* “ *Pomp follow him.*”

How affecting foever then the near Approach of Death may be (confidered abftractedly) to human Imagination, yet this bears no Comparifon with thofe Pains which are, at that Time, infeparable from *a wounded Confcience*. Here lies the fharpeft Sting of Death. There can be no Affliction fo grievous, no Anguifh fo pungent as that felt by the moft fenfible and tender Part, the *Mind*: Nor can any

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any Calamities distress *That* like the Terrors of Guilt, and the Dread of an incensed Deity: Nor do these ever act so powerfully upon it as at the Hour of Death.—What amazingly dismal Reflexions must haunt the guilty Soul at this critical Time!—These are *real* Spectres of the Mind: Such as no Language can describe; no Idea, without a dreadful Experience, comprehend.—In the Retrospect nothing presents itself to the poor unhappy Malefactor, but Crimes unpardoned; redeeming Mercy trampled on; and spiritual Grace rejected. And the Prospect before him is, if possible, more awful still, viz. an offended Judge; —a solemn Trial;—an irreverfible Doom. —This is that *second Death*, the Duration of which is without Period, and its Pains are beyond Description.

Yet perhaps it may be alledged, that
the

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the Sinner, when his final Sickneſs comes, and he begins to feel the mortal Viper faſtening to his Heart, will then rouse out of his Lethargy, and apply earneſtly to his almighty Saviour for Pardon and Relief. With trembling Accents, and decaying Faculties, he will then cry for Mercy to that ſovereign Being, whoſe Goodneſs he has ſo vilely abuſed.—

But this is a ſlippery Foundation to ſtand upon,—a *conſtrained* Application to his affronted Majeſty. Is it likely, is it reaſonable, to hope that the King of Heaven (gracious as he is) will be reconciled to thoſe ungrateful Subjects that have ſtood incorrigible under all his Mercies and Reproofs? that have continued rebellious to the laſt Stage of Life?—a Time when they can rebel no longer?—What, ſhall they ſtand *all the Day* idle, and expect to have their poor defective Services accepted *in the Evening*? when *their Strength* is

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is become *Labor and Sorrow*, and Nature is languishing to her lowest Ebb? This is a Presumption which neither Reason nor Religion can encourage, nor even the vainest Flattery suggest.

Besides, *this* is a Time which calls for all the Comfort and Support that can possibly be administered, and is but ill suited to a spiritual Conflict. Whenever the profligate Wretch (tho' in the Bloom of Health and Activity) begins to reflect on his Miscarriages, and to trace his past Conduct thro' all the various Stages and Circumstances of it, he will find a Work of the utmost Difficulty incumbent upon him.—But how infinitely must this be aggravated by the Decay of Nature!— In the needful Business of Repentance, the Severities to be undergone are great and innumerable. Our most darling Gratifications must be renounced; our
most

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most predominant Passions subdued; and
our most inveterate evil Habits, which
are *ingrained* in the Disposition, utterly
rooted out. We must also turn our Af-
fections, as well as Aversions, into a new
Channel. A sincere, operative Love of
God in Christ, should be introduced into
the Heart, and for ever after reside there.
There should unite the Springs of all true
Religion, FAITH and GRACE. And
from thence should flow Temperance,
Meekness, Charity, and every other ami-
able Virtue.——And is a Task thus
difficult, which demands the most as-
siduous Application of human Nature,
and that too in her best State, her utmost
Strength and Vigor, likely to be per-
formed upon a feeble Death-Bed?——
When all the Powers of the Mind are
cramped, and the whole Body is ener-
vated?——Inconceivable;——impossible:
If

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* If the Lamp of the dying Sinner is yet unfurnished with Oil, by what possible Means shall he become qualified, in these distressed Circumstances, to supply it? Was he even *inclined*, yet how must he be *able*, in this languid Condition, to go and buy? 'Tis true, there is no Work too mighty for cœlestial Grace to execute; no Difficulty which redeeming Mercy cannot conquer. That omnipotent Being, who, by a single Breath of his Mouth, diffused the chearful Light of Heaven over the dreary Regions of *chaotick* Darknes; who caused the Deaf to hear, and the Blind to see; who made † “ *the lame Man leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb to sing;*” can also snatch a notorious criminal from the very Jaws of Ruin. But this would be a narrow Escape indeed; even no less than

* Alluding to the Parable of the ten Virgins,—Mat. xxv.

† Isa. xxxv. 6.

than a miraculous “Salvation of our
“God.”

I wish, with the most sincere and undissembled Ardor, that those unthinking Mortals, who have been so careless and abandoned as to postpone Repentance to this *late Hour*, may even then, if it pleases God, find Mercy; thro’ the Merits of a bleeding Saviour obtain a perfect Reconciliation; and be saved at the last by a Miracle of Grace, and “like a Fire-Brand snatched out of the Fire!”—But God forbid that you or I should run such a dreadful Risque! An immortal Soul is of too high a Value to be thus dangerously exposed.—It would be Imprudence,—it would be Stupidity,—it would be Madness.

I would now beg Leave only to observe further, from my first Proposition,
(with

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(with a View to deter you from the Pursuit of a wicked Course of Life) that the natural and most general Effect of a continued Progress in Sin (when overtaken by a Death-Bed) is an actual *Despondence* of the divine Mercy.—And what a deplorable, what a shocking State is this! Full of Horror, Perturbation, and Distress! —When Health and Vigor (those best Relishers of every temporal Gratification) begin to fail, and all the Roses of Prosperity to fade! when the tenderest Relations can contribute nothing towards Relief, but pour forth fruitless Tides of Sorrow; and even the most valued Friends are no more than *miserable Comforters*; when all the borrowed Succours of a gay deluding World are totally annihilated;—more especially, when the Name of God in Christ Jesus, which is alone capable of yielding the most solid Comfort, is, instead of this, become an
insupportable

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insupportable Torment; when the grateful Appellations of Father and Redeemer are converted into those of Enemy and Avenger,—where is there a Scene to be exhibited on this Side the Grave, so horrible and distracting?—What a poor, miserable, pusillanimous Creature is the late daring, flagitious Rebel now become! What inconceivable Anguish does he feel! What terrible Apprehensions of the just Vengeance of God in a new and unknown World! a World that he must soon be plunged into. A *Sting*, incomparably sharper than any which a bare natural Death ever felt, penetrates his Heart. A shuddering Dread overwhelms him: “Fearfulness and Trembling take hold upon him.” For, Guilt, when attacked, is ever an apparent Coward, and cannot help startling at its own Deformity: But never does it so visibly betray its Cowardice, as when it is thus divested

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divested of its Power, and can proceed no farther. And how can we hope, in such a wretched Situation, and at so late a Period, but that Despair,—gloomy, comfortless, dire Despair, will succeed in its Place?

Such are the fatal and malignant Consequences of SIN.—How deservedly does the Apostle style it “*the Sting of Death!*” And how emphatically just is that terrifying Prediction of inspired Wisdom! Its † “*End is bitter as Worm-wood, sharp as a two-edged Sword.*”—And again; ‡ “*at the last it biteth like a Serpent, and stingeth like an Adder.*”

The preceding Considerations, my Brethren, (without insisting on any other Argument) will, I hope, prevail upon you, by the Assistance of God's good Spirit,

† Prov. v. 4.

‡ Prov. xxiii. 32.

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Spirit, to abstain with the utmost Caution
from all Iniquity. If you believe the
Premises, there needs *no Conclusion*. If
you believe that Sin is productive of
such dire Effects, as have been here re-
presented, you can surely want no Ad-
monition to renounce it. "*Break*", re-
solutely break, "*its Bonds asunder, and*
"*cast away its Cords from you.*" When-
ever you begin to feel the Serpent fasten-
ing to your Breast, dally not with its
Sting: Hesitate not a Moment, but in-
stantly dislodge the perfidious Guest:
Be inflexibly deaf to all his subtle Insi-
nuations; Shake off, without Debate, the
clinging Poison.—And, since "in the
"Midst of Life you are in Death;"
since the Transition from this World into
Eternity is both short and uncertain;
do not squander away your Health and
Spirits in idle Follies and Amusements;
Abuse no Opportunities; but employ
the

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the golden Hours to the noblest and best of all Purposes,—the Service of your God, and the Happiness of your Souls: Endeavor, earnestly endeavor, to *be wise in Time*; and, before it be too late, *consider your latter End.*—May the almighty God give us all Grace seriously to consider it, and duly to prepare for it! that we may, at that Time, feel *no Sting*, but such as naturally attends the Separation of Soul and Body. May the precious Light of his Countenance *then* especially shine upon us! May the most effectual Intercession of our Redeemer comfort and support us! And may the benign Influence of the Holy Ghost, conduct us thro' the dreary Vale of Death, to the blissful Regions of everlasting Life!—Amen, and Amen!

Ser. XVIII. [the fearful Sing of Death. 547]
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Life!—Amen, and Amen!

N. A. S. R.

S E R M O N X I X .

Christ's Victory over Sin and Death.

1 COR. XV. 54, 55, 56, 57.

Death is swallowed up in Victory. O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law. But Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON XIX.

Christ's Victory over Sin and Death.
1 Cor. xv. 54-57.
Death is swallowed up in Victory. O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. He hath swallowed up Death in Victory, O Grave, where is thy Victory? O Death, where is thy Sting? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.



S E R M O N XIX.

Christ's Victory over Sin and Death.

1 C O R. XV. 54, 55, 56, 57.

DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING?

O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?

THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, AND

THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW.

BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHICH

GIVETH US THE VICTORY THRO' OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST.

IF we attend to the spiritual and intrinsic Meaning of the *Law*, as explained in the best Sermon that was ever preached on Earth,—our blessed Saviour's on the Mount,—and impartially compare the whole Tenor of our Deportment with it, we shall perceive how grossly we have

violated its holy Precepts. The most exemplary Christian in the World, upon a fair Scrutiny into his real Character, will find himself obliged to acknowledge this deplorable Truth. His Life is a prompt Confession of his being "born in Sin," and that he is, by Nature, obnoxious to the divine Wrath: A transient View of the History of the *Fall* will not only discover to us the Loss of our native Rectitude, but we shall there see how much the Faculties of the Mind are depraved: that we have not barely lost our Innocence, but are exceedingly prone to every Kind of Sin. Our Understanding is perverted, our Passions are headstrong and impetuous, and our Lusts clamorous and unsatisfied. This innate Corruption our first Parent, by a single Act of Disobedience, entailed upon his whole Posterity. From this foul original Fountain flow all the polluted Streams of

of human Guilt. For, we are assured, by a Writer who cannot mistake, that * “ *in Adam all die;*”—die in *Trespases and Sins;*—die to Righteousness, and all the Graces of the spiritual Life.

If there is any Person who scruples to admit this Doctrine of original Depravity, and regards it as a rigorous and unjust Imputation, that the Offence of one Man should incur Misery on Millions, then unborn, let him scrutinize into the Secrets of his own Heart, (for the pure and eternal God “ *requireth Truth in the inward Parts*”) and take a minute Account how Matters are regulated there.—Is every Lust mortified, and every Passion held under due Restraint? Is every *Tittle* of that just and holy Law, which is the great Standard of Christianity, closely adhered to? Is each moral Duty strictly complied

complied with? Is every Thought, Word, and Action, holy, just, and good? And will they stand the Test of Omniscience? In a Word, has *a perfect Service* been rendered to an all-perfect God?—Whoever can acquit himself with Honor in such an Examination, is both an Exception to that generally received Article of the Church, (i. e.) *original Sin*, and likewise meritoriously disproves the Assertion of Saint Paul, (i. e.) that * “by
“ *the Deeds of the Law there shall no Flesh*
“ *be justified.*” But if, instead of this, he perceives within himself a strong Attachment to the vicious Allurements of the World; if he is led away by any of its empty Honors, its bewitching Pleasures, or its sordid Gains; if he has ever once deviated from the Path of his Duty either to God or Man; if he has ever entertained an evil Thought, or by
any

* Rom. iii. 22.

any one Word or Action broken that divine Law, which the Apostle styles the very *Strength of Sin*,—he must then surely acknowledge the Pollution of his natural State: And he must confess also the Necessity of being cloathed with a better Robe of Righteousness than his own, (which the Prophet declares is but † “*as filthy Rags*”) if he expects to be admitted into those holy Mansions, where nothing unclean shall enter. ‡ “*For* X
 “*whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and*
 “*yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.*”
 That is, an Obedience to the Will of God is not *partially*, but *universally* required: And whoever transgresses only in *one* Instance, is as much guilty of a Breach of his Duty, and as certainly punishable, as if he had broken the *whole* Law. The Law allows of no Transgression, nor excuses any. It suffers not a single Breach
 to

† Isa. lxiv. 6.

‡ James ii. 10.

to pass with Impunity. It is indeed essentially necessary in prescribing to us the Rules of our Allegiance; but it affords no Remedy for Sin, nor Hopes of recovering the once forfeited Sweets of Innocence. It lashes the Wounds of the guilty Penitent, and recommends him to the *Gospel* to effect their Cure.

In that sacred Chart, what an amiable, what a miraculous Portrait of divine Love is held forth to our View! This is that radiant and express Image of God, that “*bowed the Heavens, and came down,*” and was “*found in Fashion as a Man.*” This is that infallible Physician of Souls, who is both able and willing to heal the *Bruises* ingrafted in our Nature, and contracted by the *Fall*. This is that “*Lord*” “*Jesus Christ,*” whom the Apostle refers to in the Text, and thro’ whose unspeakable Merits we are crowned with Victory
over

over Sin and Death; a Blessing, which it is our Duty to express in the sincerest Sentiments of Gratitude and Thanksgiving:—"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ."—And this is what I proposed, in my last Discourse, to make the Subject of my SECOND GENERAL HEAD.

That same precious and invaluable Book of God, the Bible, that declares our natural Sinfulness and Distress, prescribes also the most effectual Means of Recovery. A Promise of redeeming Mercy is conspicuous in almost every Page. Tho' we have forfeited our Claim to the Patronage of God, by the Violation of his Law, yet let us not despond, for we are reinstated in his Favor by the great Atonement for the Sins of the whole Universe. His *beloved Son*, in whom he has given his own attesting Voice

Voice, that he is *well pleased*, has made ample Satisfaction to his Father's Wrath. He has invariably fulfilled the whole Law, and by his perfect and meritorious Obedience, shall every sincere, tho' imperfect and unworthy Believer, be accepted at the Throne of Grace.

This merciful Design of Man's Redemption by Jesus Christ, was disclosed in the infant-State of the World, and communicated to Posterity by divine Inspiration, thro' each *Patriarchal, Jewish, and Prophetic Age*. It was primarily revealed to *Adam*, as an admirable Contrast to his Transgression; was promised to the *Patriarch Abraham*, out of whose Stock the **RIGHTEOUS BRANCH** was to shoot forth; was typically represented by *Moses* to the *Israelites*; and more illustriously confirmed by the *Prophets*. The Son of *Amoz* particularly, in the true Spirit of Prediction,

Prediction, thus describes the laudable Office of IMMANUEL, together with his peaceable, glorious, and unbounded Dominion;—* “For unto us a Child is
“born, unto us a Son is given: and the
“Government shall be upon his Shoulder:
“and his NAME shall be called, WON-
“DERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE
“MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING
“FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.
“Of the Increase of his Government and
“Peace, there shall be no End upon the
“Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom,
“to order it, and to establish it with Judg-
“ment and with Justice, from henceforth
“even for ever. The Zeal of the Lord of
“Hosts will perform this.” The same
sublime Writer also (in his fifty-third Chapter) paints the last Scene of our
Saviour’s Sufferings in the most lively
Colors, and, in very tender and pathetic
Strains,

* Isa. ix. 6. 7.

Strains, relates the Circumstances of his unparalleled Grief—Nor are the other Prophets deficient in characterizing the Nature of the Messiah's Kingdom, the Peace he should propagate, and the mighty Salvation he should accomplish for his faithful Adherents.

But what I would *especially* recommend to your Perusal, (and that with a View to advance your spiritual Improvements; as well as to remove every the least Doubt or Scruple with Regard to the Christian System) is that final, perfect, and complete Revelation,—the GOSPEL.—*Here* is displayed that majestic SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, which shone thro' all the Storms of a prophane World; which dissipated the Mists of Doubt, and bade Hope give Way to Conviction; which produced into a full, clear, and open Light whatever was dimly pre-figured

figured by the Law, or predicted by the Prophets :—*Here* we have a dignified, an accomplished Character indeed!—Tho' humble, yet how exalted! Tho' reviled, yet how glorious! Tho' human, yet how divine!—Alone distinguished by every amiable Virtue, and unobscured by any Shadow of Vice :—*Here* we are informed, that the blessed Saviour of repenting Sinners, was no less a Person than the Son of the eternal Deity :—Ushered into the World with joyful Acclamations of the angelic Choir, and yet held in Derision and Contempt by ungrateful Man :—Conquered, tho' omnipotent ;—treated with the utmost Scorn and Severity, yet meek and merciful : Seized as a common Malefactor, tho' perfectly innocent ;—and, tho' void of all Imperfection,—arraigned at a human Bar,—tried,—condemned,—crucified. —*Here* too is ascertained to our Faith,

the grand Catastrophe of all,—that which our Lord foretold of Himself, and on which the most shining Proof of his Mission depended,—the RESURREC-

TION. When every Purpose for which He obeyed, suffered and died, was answered; then did all-conquering Death yield up its Trophy, and the surrendering Grave acknowledge the superior Power by which it was controlled.—

Almighty Justice released Him, on the third Day, from its gloomy Prison, and He arose victorious from the Dead.—

After this extraordinary Event, the Scripture relates, that He visibly ascended from his Disciples into Heaven, * “and

“ *a Cloud received him out of their Sight;*”

while *Two* of the celestial Inhabitants stood by them in white Apparel, and proclaimed Him the identical *Jesus* that shall one Day descend in like Manner:

intimating,

* Acts i. 9.

intimating, without Doubt, *to judge the Quick and Dead.*—Thus authentically is the divine Mission of Christ, the Son of God, declared, proved, and illustrated: Thus stable is the Foundation on which Christians build their eternal Hopes:—And thus miraculously is *Death swallowed up in Victory.*—*O Death, where is now thy Sting? O Grave, where is now thy Victory?* 'Tis true, *the Sting of Death to the Wicked is Sin; and the Strength of Sin is the Law.* But Thanks be to God, who giveth penitent Believers *the Victory, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.*

If you pay a proper Degree of Attention to that sacred History which I have been recommending, you will there discern each particular Appointment, which the Holy Trinity vouchsafes distinctly and unanimously to engage in, for the Salvation of your Souls. And

while you admire the *gracious Convention*, (as it is not possible but you *must* admire) you will surely adore that superior Wisdom and Goodness, so conspicuously displayed in the *Œconomy* of Man's Recovery. The strict Justice of God the Father demands and accepts, the infinite Love and Condescension of God the Son pays and deposits, and the benign Influence of God the Holy Ghost communicates to us the Benefits of, a full Propitiation for our Sins. Yes, the Communication is justly attributed to the Spirit JEHOVAH; for † “ *no Man can say, that* “ *Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*” It is the effectual Operation of his Grace that applies to fallen Man the inestimable Privilege of the Redemption: It is This that makes him sensible how much his final Happiness depends upon a HOLY FAITH,—upon combating successfully the

the Temptations of Satan under the Banner of Christ, our victorious Lord.

Say, has not Heaven here exhausted all its Bounty? Here is free Pardon and Reconciliation; here is kind, assisting Grace; and here is unmerited and everlasting Happiness proposed on the most equitable Terms:—*Proposed* did I say? —We are even *invited* to embrace them: we are *intreated* to pursue our own Interest: we are *solicited* to be happy. Hear the most gracious Invitation of your blessed Lord to this Purpose;—† “Come unto me, “all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, “and I will give you Rest. Take my Yoke “upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek “and lowly in Heart: and ye shall find Rest “unto your Souls. For my Yoke is easy, “and my Burden is light.” Comfortable Expressions! and intended to revive the
O o 3 desponding

† Mat. xi. 28, 29, 30.

desponding Heart ! They introduce into it Gladness and Serenity, while *Sorrow and Mourning flee away*. They are noble Incentives to repair to Christ, when we labor under any difficult or afflictive Circumstance, and an unspeakable Encouragement to the Practice of his Religion.

With what grateful Sentiments then should the very Name of this Saviour and Redeemer, who hath done and suffered so much in our Behalf, inspire our Souls ! What exalted Notions should we entertain of his all-sufficient Mediation ! And how ought we to congratulate ourselves on our peculiar Felicity, who, tho' sunk into Sin, Death, and Misery by *Adam*, are raised to Righteousness, Life, and Glory by *Jesus Christ* ! Inexpressibly dreadful, and shocking to the human Ear, is that *Law* which denounces Death
eternal

eternal upon every Transgressor; † “*Indignation, and Wrath, Tribulation, and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.*” But as truly comfortable and reviving is that Gospel which § “*is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*” Every sincere Penitent is hereby * “*begotten again unto a lively Hope,*” and intitled “*to an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for him.*”—Thanks be to God, who giveth us so compleat a Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ! Thanks be to his blessed Name, whose Death is our Sacrifice, whose Obedience is our Righteousness, and whose Resurrection is our Justification! Thanks, Heart-felt Thanks be to Him, who thus miraculously extended

O o 4

his

† Rom. ii. 8, 9. § Rom. i. 16. * 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

his Compassion to his sinful Creatures, who had involved themselves in otherwise irretrievable Ruin! The Cords of Sin are now broken, the Bonds of Death dissolved, and all the Powers of Hell subdued.

Intirely reasonable too are the *Conditions*, as well as gracious the *Overtures* of this redeeming Love. For, if we make a voluntary Confession of our Unworthinefs by Nature, lament our unguarded Follies, and feel a real Concern for our deliberate Sins,—if we turn unto the Lord our God with unaffected Humiliation and Repentance, and confide, as we ought, in the Merits of a crucified Saviour, our Imperfections shall be connived at, and our Iniquities forgiven;—nay, Crimes even of the deepest Dye shall be obliterated: for, * “ *though our*
“ *Sins*

*"Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white
"as Snow; tho' they be red like Crimfon,
"they shall be as Wool:"* they shall be
cleansed in that precious Blood, by Vir-
tue of which we shall be crowned at last
with immortal Glory.

A Remark here offers itself, particu-
larly intitled to our Regard: which is,
that, tho' the Gospel proclaims Salvation
by Faith in our Redeemer, and *not by the
Deeds of the Law*, yet it is such a com-
prehensive Faith, as includes the *Practice
of Holiness*, which claims a conditional
Part in the obtaining of that Salvation.
Tho' God hath given us the *Victory thro' our
Lord Jesus Christ*, (may such matchless
Goodness erect a Monument of the most
fervent Gratitude in our Hearts!) yet
Rebels, Traitors, and Deserters, shall
have no Share in the Reward. Be it
ever remembered (and that with the best
Returns

Returns of the most affectionate and adoring Piety) that the Captain of our Salvation hath overcome the Sharpness of Death! But let it not be forgot, that it is to Believers only, and to such faithful Soldiers as engage with inflexible Courage and Perseverance in the Christian Warfare, that He will open the Kingdom of Heaven. Tho' the Doctrine of Redemption is replete with the richest Comforts, and productive of the highest Advantages; tho' it is impossible for the human Mind to display the Merits of it with suitable Thanksgiving and Praise, or for the penitential Sinner to confide in it too much; yet is it by no Means intended to authorize Indolence, or encourage Vice. No; instead of this, it excites us to all the Duties of obliged and dependent Beings, gives the most effectual Check to every headstrong Sin, and is the noblest Inducement to all Piety and Virtue. One, who

who was an exemplary Penitent, and but too well acquainted with the Impetuosity of the Passions, and the Defilement of our Nature, cries out, * “ *There is Mercy with Thee: THEREFORE shalt Thou be feared.* ”——Words of great Significancy, and clearly in Favor of the present Argument. If *Mercy* belongs to the Almighty, for that very Reason we should *fear* to offend him. We should tremble to think of forfeiting our Title to so much Goodness. Imagination shudders at the Thought of being deprived even of any *temporal* Possession that we hold dear and valuable;—how much more shocking must the bare Apprehension be of losing the inexpressibly superior Benefits of *divine Mercy*! more especially, that distinguished Part of it, which shines with such transcendent Lustre in the *Redemption*. And if we are

* Psa. cxxx. 4.

are struck with Horror at the *Thought only* of being excluded from a Participation in the Privileges of this amiable Attribute, we shall surely be vigilant in avoiding all possible Means that might *actually incur* upon us so great an Injury. And it is a natural Consequence, that we shall also study diligently to secure the Approbation of that Being to whom it belongs. And this never can be accomplished, but by such a Conduct, as proceeds from an undissembled Love of his holy Name, and operates in a regular Obedience to his Commands.

From this favourable Occasion, I cannot help observing how groundless and unwarrantable are all the Reproaches that are levelled against that sound, Christian Doctrine, *Salvation by Faith*. Its Adversaries assert, that it tends to promote Licentiousness, and indulge Iniquity.—

This

This I positively deny.—On the contrary, there can be no true, genuine, scriptural Faith, but such as includes a Detestation of Sin, and a Delight in Holiness. Christianity is a practical Profession; and a sincere Piety is its very Badge and Character. It proclaims to the World a Love of God, our Neighbour, and every moral Duty.—And, wherever a *correspondent Practice* is wanting, there is no Faith. It is all nothing but mere *Enthusiasm* or *Hypocrisy*.—When we trust then that we are delivered by Faith in Christ, we mean also a Delivery “*from the present wicked World;*” and when we affirm, that we are redeemed by him, this also signifies a Redemption “*from all Iniquity, and that we may be a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.*”

It is not in my Power to give you a more perfect Definition of both the *Law* and

and the *Gospel*, than I have offered to your Attention upon this Subject. I would endeavor to convince you, that, in Opposition to all specious Arguments, and after the most critical Researches you can make, the Sum of Religion, as relative to your eternal Salvation, centers in two Words; viz.—a PRACTICAL FAITH:—that is, such a Faith in God, *who giveth us the Victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ*, as will induce us (by the Assistance of his Holy Spirit) to repent of every sinful Action, and exert our best Endeavors to keep his Commandments. —Here shines the *Gospel*; and this Gospel adds Lustre to the *Law*.

God grant that these Reflexions may have a due Influence on every future Thought, Word, and Action of our Lives! May He vouchsafe to “prevent us in all our Doings,” and direct every
Step

Step we take through this sinful World !
That whenever Death, that universally
expected Messenger, shall arrive, we may
be in a Capacity to treat it as much like
a *real Friend*, as a *vanquished Enemy*, be-
hold its Sting extracted, and at once
consider it as the End of all Pain and
Sorrow, and the Beginning of eternal
Bliss and Happiness.

Now to Him who hath “ overcome
“ Death, and opened unto us the Gate
“ of everlasting Life,” together with the
Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed,
as is most due, all Honor, Glory, and
Praise, &c. Amen.

Step we take through this fatal World!
 That whenever Death, that universally
 expected Messenger, shall arrive, we may
 be in a Capacity to meet it as much like
 a well fitted, as a surprised Party, be-
 hold it being expected, and at once
 consider it as the End of all Pain and
 Sorrow, and the Beginning of eternal
 Bliss and Happiness.

Now to Him who hath overcome
 "Death, and opened unto us the Gate
 "of everlasting Life," together with the
 Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed,
 as is most due, all Honor, Glory, and
 Praise, &c. Amen.

S E R M O N XX.
T H E
D A Y of J U D G M E N T.

2 C O R. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

THE
DAY OF JUDGMENT.
SERMON XX.



For we shall all appear before the Judgment
Seat of Christ, that every one may receive
the things done in his Body, according
to what he hath done, whether it be good
or bad.

S E R M O N XX.

The Day of Judgment.

2 C O R. V. 10. X

FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE
JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST, THAT
EVERY ONE MAY RECEIVE THE THINGS
DONE IN HIS BODY, ACCORDING TO
THAT HE HATH DONE, WHETHER IT
BE GOOD OR BAD.

HOW solemn and affecting are these
Words! And how worthy to be in-
scribed on every human Heart! In their
direct Meaning they afford us a more
important Subject than has yet fallen
under our Consideration.—*We must all
appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ;*
—There is a Day approaching, (a myste-
rious Truth this, and known only to

P p 2

omniscient

omniscient Wisdom) when not a select Number only, but every human Being that has ever trod the Stage of Life from the very Commencement of Time to that Hour, shall be summoned to appear before the Tribunal of his Saviour and his Judge;—*that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;—*that the whole Conduct of each particular Person may be then examined, and that, according to his naked and true Appearance, whether good or evil, he may receive an everlasting and irreversible Allotment (both in Body and Soul) either to Bliss or Woe.

Grand, tremendous, decisive Day!—
At *That Time* will the Trump of God
sound the universal Summons. The
Jaws of Death shall be *then* broken, and
the voracious Grave commanded to dis-
gorge

Ser. XX.] *The Day of Judgment.* 581

gorge its Prey. Multitudes innumerable shall emerge from their watry Sepulchres, and spring to immortal Life. The scattered Particles of the human Frame shall be collected from a thousand different Quarters, and not only reinstated, but fashioned into an incorruptible Body. Then shall Adam, at one View, behold all his Sons and Daughters, and stand wondering at the long Line of his own Posterity. Christians, Jews, Pagans, and all Persons of every Sect and Denomination, by what Title soever distinguished, or wheresoever dispersed, shall meet together at the Bar of infinite Justice. *Europeans* and *Asiatics*, the swarthy Sons of *Africk*, and the untutored Savages of *America* shall unite, and form one general Crowd. In short, all Nations of the Earth, all Ages and Degrees of Men, Millions and Millions of Mortals, all that have peopled the

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World thro' a continued Succession of Generations, since its first Formation, old and young, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, shall be raised *in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye*, and convene in one vast Assembly.

Amongst this amazingly numerous Concourſe, muſt you and I, my Brethren, irrefiſtibly make our Appearance. Tho' in the Miſt of ſuch an inconceivable Multitude of Beings like ourſelves, we ſhall ſeem but as a Drop of Water in the unfathomed Ocean, or a Grain of Sand on the Sea-Shore; yet think not that we ſhall be loſt to the Notice of our omniſcient Judge, or elude his all-ſeeing Eye, For, as * "*the Darkneſs and Light to Him*" "*are both alike,*" "and as † "*a thouſand*" "*Years are as one Day,*" ſo ‡ "*Nations*" "*are as a Drop of a Bucket, and are*" "*counted*"

* Pſa. cxxxix. 11.

† 2 Pet. iii. 8.

‡ Iſa. xl. 15.

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"counted as the small Dust of the Balance."

Every one shall be as distinctly remarked, and his State as minutely scanned and adjusted, as if the Actions of but a single Soul were to be accounted for.

It is a Remark highly worthy of our Attention, that the universal Judgment will be committed to the REDEEMER of Mankind. And it is a Truth which cannot fail of administering Comfort to the Redeemed; a Truth, which may well reconcile every sincere Believer to the certain Expectation of that awful Period, which lays a solid Foundation for his best Hopes, and which imparts an inexpressible Honor to the Christian Name. This is a clear Doctrine both of the New Testament in general, and also a shining Peculiarity of the Gospel-Dispensation. For we have not only the Authority of the Apostle for our Assurance, that *we*

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*must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of CHRIST, but our Lord himself hath declared by his Evangelist, that § “ the
“ Father judgeth no Man; but hath com-
“ mitted all Judgment unto the Son.”* —

The judiciary Power indeed, is primarily inherent in God alone. And certainly no one can assume an Authority of judging the Subjects, but that glorious Majesty whose Subjects they are. He is the original Author of that sacred Law by which we are to be tried and distinguished: All our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, have a direct Tendency to the divine Legislator, either to please or offend him: And it is He who * “ *shall
“ bring every Work into Judgment, with
“ every secret Thing.*” But it hath pleased
X the Almighty Father to transfer the Dignity of that momentous Day particularly to the Son. For we are told expressly,
by

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by the great Preacher at Athens, that God † “ *hath appointed a Day, in the which* “ *he will judge the World in Righteousness,* “ *by that Man whom he hath ordained.*” Tho’ ‡ God therefore is the Judge of all, it is Jesus our Saviour by whom He judgeth. There is an authoritative, supreme, ultimate Power of judging the whole Universe, delegated by an indisputable Commission to Christ the Lord.

That a REDEEMER and a JUDGE are united in one Godhead, is (as I hinted before) a very consolatory Truth. It is an immoveable Basis, on which the sincere Christian may ground his most exalted Expectations.—That gracious Being, who, for the Sake of Man alone, condescended to assume his mortal Nature, and took upon him the Form of a Servant; who suffered, in the same Cause, the

† Acts xvii. 31.

‡ Heb. xii. 23.

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the Contradiction of Sinners; who was reviled, persecuted, condemned, and crucified, may reasonably be supposed to temper Goodness with Severity, Mercy with Justice, and all possible consistent Lenity with an equitable and irrelative Judgment. Can we even desire a more favorable Judge than Him, who out of pure Compassion to those very Persons that are to be judged by him, voluntarily submitted to all the Infirmities of human Life, and to all the Miseries which that Life could incur, or Death inflict? And can any Reflexion afford us more solid Comfort than that of God and Man, Governor and Intercessor, Saviour and Judge, being all combined in one glorious Power?—Impossible.——It animates our Hope, augments our Joy, and confirms our Assurance of immortal Bliss.

Could we suppose, that a future Judgment was designed only to *bring to Light*
the

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the hidden Things of Darkneſs, diſcloſe every ſecret Tranſgreſſion of the Mind, and rigorouſly condemn every actual Commiſſion of Sin, excluding the Benefits of the divine Atonement, that vicarious Sacrifice which our bleſſed Lord made of himſelf, the bare Idea of ſo dreadful a Proſpect would render us extremely wretched: we ſhould not only be *of all Men*, but, (we might vary the Apoſtle's Phraſe) of all living Creatures the *moſt miſerable*. For, in that Caſe, the leaſt of thoſe many deliberate Sins, which the moſt upright Mortal muſt acknowledge himſelf guilty of, would be ſufficient to expoſe him to a fearful Experience *of the righteous Judgment of God*. And it is an undeniable Truth, that the wortheſt of human Actions, conſidered in an abſtracted Light, can merit no Degree of that *eternal Weight of Glory*, which will be the certain Portion of the Saints. It
is

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is therefore absolutely necessary for us
to depend upon a superior Agent as a
Propitiation for our Sins; to believe that
we shall receive our final Sentence, not
according to the Severity of the *Law*,
but the Mercies of the *Gospel*; and to be
convinced, that *the Son of Man*, who
forfeited his Life for our Redemption,
is no less a Person than Christ *the Son of*
God. And it is a Reflexion, which every
Believer will find replete with inex-
pressible Comfort, that *this same Jesus*
who is our Brother in the Flesh, our Re-
deemer, and our Advocate, shall sit on
the Throne as Judge, at the last great
Day of Accounts.

But we are further candidly admo-
nished by the Apostle of the great I N-
TENT of our being summoned *before*
the Judgment-Seat of Christ;—It is for
this very important Reason,—*that every*
one

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one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. This is clear and intelligible Language. And if we depend on its Veracity, we must believe that Christ, who expired on the Cross for our Sakes in this World, will pronounce an everlasting Sentence upon us in the next, according to our Behaviour in this probationary State. We shall then find, as sure as we are now upon Earth, that, tho' our Salvation depends on the precious Merits of Christ our Saviour, yet the indispensable Condition of it is the Practice of a holy and penitential Life. We shall then be convinced, that no Pretensions or Degree of Faith will profit us, but that which is the leading Principle of our Religion; that inward, genuine Faith, which possesses the most distinguished Place in the Christian Economy; that main Corner-Stone in
our

our Profession, which is suited to support the whole Fabrick of good Works. It will be then incontestibly, and experimentally proved to us, that Virtue is by far the noblest and most beneficial Ornament of the Mind, and Vice its basest Furniture. The one, under its own proper Agent, (the ever blessed Spirit) will exalt us to the Realms of immortal Bliss; and the other (without a sincere Repentance) depress us into the Regions of infernal Darkneſs, * “*where their Worm*”
 “*dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.*”
 For the Wicked † “*shall go away into*”
 “*everlasting Punishment; but the Righteous*”
 “*into Life eternal.*”

The Righteous, does the Evangelist say, *into Life eternal?*—Yes; happy, beyond Expression or Conception happy, will be *Their* future State of Being. Their Exit
 out

* Mark ix. 44.

† Mat. xxv. 46.

out of this miserable Life shall be the certain Prelude to another of unmixed and transcendent Felicity. For † “ *Eye* “ *hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither* “ *have entered into the Heart of Man, the* “ *Things which God hath prepared for them* “ *that love him.*” The happy few, who love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity, and testify their Love by a penitential (because an imperfect) Obedience to his Commands, shall be crowned with inconceivable Honor, Glory, and Happiness in the World to come. Whatever may be their Portion in this unequal State; whether their Righteousness is here adorned with those valuable Jewels, Health and Prosperity, or eclipsed in the gloomy Shades of Sickness and Distress, they shall, with equal Certainty, be admitted at last into the Mansions of absolute and durable Bliss. If the *former*

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is their favorable Allotment, for the
Opportunities which they at present so
happily embrace, and for the Benefits
which they now so plenteously sow, they
shall reap an hundred Fold at the Day
of Retribution. For, § *“ there is laid up
“ for them a Crown of Righteousness, which
“ the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give
“ them at his appearing.”* And if the
latter should prove their Fate, their
Virtue, which is now obscured, tho’ in
Reality dignified by their Sufferings,
shall then, like the Sun breaking out of
some intercepting Cloud, appear with
fuller and more resplendent Glory.—
The lingering Hours of their Affliction,
now duly cultivated, and properly im-
proved, will then infallibly produce a
most joyful Harvest. For, || *“ he that
“ now goeth on his Way weeping, and
“ beareth forth good Seed : shall doubtless
“ come*

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"*come again with Joy, and bring his*
"*Sheaves with him.*"

It will then be one of the least Privileges of the distressed Sons of Piety to be acquainted with no more Sorrow, to feel no more Pain:—*Death* itself shall be *swallowed up in Victory*; and *Sin*, which points all its invenomed Shafts, shall be utterly extirpated. The Redeemed of the Lord shall be presented without Spot before him; and on the Heads of Them who have been *faithful unto Death*, will He confer a *Crown of Life*. Their Sorrow shall be converted into the most extatic Joy, and their Pain into the most substantial Pleasure. All Sensation, from that Moment throughout all Ages of Eternity, shall be solid Peace, and perfect Happiness.

Q q

But

But if on the other Hand we penetrate into Futurity, and anticipate the Condition of the *Wicked*, a Prospect of a quite different Nature will be presented to our Ideas. For They *shall go away into everlasting Punishment*.—Dreadful, distracting Denunciation!—Despicable and wretched as their State in *this* World generally is, yet in *another* it will be found to be infinitely more so. That bitter Remorse of Mind, which is the almost inseparable Attendant of Vice here, will be changed hereafter into one continued Scene of real, absolute,—yet unknown Misery;—Misery, such as no Language can utter, or the most distressed Imagination paint:

Impenitent Rebels seem to be confined in the Prison of the Grave, like Malefactors against the Day of Trial. Stigmatized with Infamy, and covered with Horror and Confusion, with what Face
must

must they appear at the holy Tribunal before a just and impartial Judge, and Legions of Saints and Angels? And when they see others of their Fellow-Creatures, whom they have perhaps once held in Derision and Contempt, together with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven*, and are themselves shut out, what Envy, Shame, and Indignation must alternately distract their Thoughts! They shall then begin clearly,—but too late,—to understand that awful Prediction of Solomon; that the * “ *End of Vice is* “ *bitter as Wormwood, sharp as a two-edged* “ *Sword; that its Feet go down to Death;* “ *its Steps take hold on Hell.*” And then will they reluctantly acknowledge the Folly,—the Madness of their Lives here; —Lives, that have been as it were industriously spent in unsheathing Daggers

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for

X* Prov. v. 4, 5.

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for their own Souls, and preparing them for all the Torments of Eternity.

What a contemptible Appearance must the stubborn Sinner, the once audacious Rebel, *then* make, when he stands before his inexorable Majesty, amid the Armies of both Heaven and Earth! What then will be the Issue † “ *of all his ungodly Deeds which he hath committed*” against his Maker, “ *and of all his hard Speeches, which he hath spoken against him?*” — Where must he flee for Shelter from the Storm of God’s Wrath? Where can he find a Sanctuary, when the Vials of omnipotent Fury are poured out? What Darts of Agony must transfix his Conscience, when struck with a full Sense of his past Ingratitude! And what real Misery must he undergo, when seized with that gloomy, nameless Terror, which
is

† Jude v. 25.

is sure, at that Time, to be the Consequence of unrepented-of Vice!—Has he been an open, daring, presumptuous Offender?—What a mean, cowardly, dejected Countenance will then betray the Baseness of his Heart! He will then be thoroughly taught what it is to irritate the Almighty God; to ridicule the gracious Method of Reconciliation by the Son; and to reject, with Scorn, the repeated Overtures of the Spirit. The *Power* which he has defied, the *Mercy* which he has contemned, and the *Grace* which he has trampled on, will all bear Witness against him, and be honored by his eternal Confusion, Misery, and Despair.—Has he been a *secret Enemy of the Lord*? And has he studied only to maintain a Character in the Eyes of his Fellow-Creatures, regardless of that true Praise and Honor which flows from a sincere and well-disposed Heart?—

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Deluded Wretch! What will all his sub-
tle Artifices avail in *that* Day, when “*God*
“*will bring every Work into Judgment,*
“*with every secret Thing, whether it be*
“*good, or whether it be evil?*” What will
his outward Glosses and Pretensions
profit him, when recognized by that
omniscient Being, “*unto whom all*
“*Hearts are open, all Desires known,*
“*and from whom no Secrets are hid?*”
Every Mask shall drop off before Him,
and Dissimulation shall be exposed to its
eternal Infamy, in *His Sight*, and in that
of the *holy Angels*. Then shall the steeled
Heart of the vilest Profligate relent, and
the smooth Face of the most artful Sy-
cophant lie down in Confusion. And
both shall receive their appointed Por-
tion with *Hypocrites and Unbelievers*; both
be consigned to that unutterably dread-
ful State, that knows no Rest, Hope, or
Period.

Whether

Whether the Sinner *will hear*, or whether he *will forbear*, he shall certainly find these Things to be serious Matters of Truth;—such as I defy the most subtle Infidel to confute, or the gay Libertine to banter down.

The singular Importance of this Subject, will, I hope, further command your Attention, while I endeavor to apply such Reflexions as it naturally suggests.

If we must all appear before the *Judgment Seat of Christ*; and for this Purpose, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad; there is a Day approaching, when the Sun, with all the other heavenly Luminaries, shall be extinct, and the whole Fabrick of the visible Creation dissolved; when the Soul and Body of every human Being shall

be re-united, and summoned before the Throne of their Almighty Sovereign; if Christ, that very Person, who hath directed us by his Doctrine, encouraged us by his Example, and washed us in his Blood, is *Then* to be our Judge; and if an Eternity of inexpressible Pain, or Pleasure, transcendent Happiness, or Misery, shall hang on the Point of that decisive Moment, and be determined according to our Conduct in this short State of Trial;—if all this be true, (which it incontestibly is) then, for H E A V E N's Sake, my Brethren, let us consider in Time † “*what Manner of Persons we ought to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness.*”——Let us probe our Hearts to the Bottom, and examine strictly how they find themselves affected with meditating on this great Change. Is it possible to make an Inquiry of *greater,—of equal* Concern?

Concern? Is it possible to be too diligent in searching into the true State of our Souls, which are to be happy, or miserable for ever?—No: The utmost Vigor of our Faculties, the most sedulous Application of human Power is requisite in so grand a Cause. In this noble Sense, “*whatsoever we do, let us do it with our*” “*Might.*” Here let us spare no Endeavors; grudge no Time;—Endeavors thus wisely exerted;—Time, thus well employed. But let the whole Force of our Reason be collected, the whole Bent of our Inclination engaged, and God’s holy Spirit ardently supplicated to direct and corroborate both, that we *may be found of him in Peace*, irreprehensible and irrefragable.

We are All, I am persuaded, Professors of the Christian Religion; and do declare our Assent to the Being of a God, the Immortality

mortality of the Soul, and the Resurrection of the Body. We pretend also to believe that there is a Day appointed *when the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all the holy Angels with him, to confer everlasting Honor and Happiness on his faithful and obedient Servants, and to take Vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—What amazing, what unpardonable Stupidity must it then be to betray the Sincerity of our Profession by living in a contemptuous Neglect of all that renders Life truly desirable!—Every sublunary Wish, set in Opposition to one serious Thought on *Eternity*, vanishes like a Dream.—How then can we fix our Affection on the glittering Toys of *this* World, and disregard the *one Thing needful*! How can we idolize the mere Phantoms of an Hour, and expose our immortal Souls to irretrievable Ruin!—

One

One would think it impossible:—One would imagine it to be even out of the Power of a *rational* Creature, and especially any who styles himself a CHRISTIAN, to act so absurd a Part. Because it is rebelling directly against Reason, against Religion, and against his own most valuable Interest. It is bartering eternal Happiness for temporal Trifles. It is hastening to Perdition with his Eyes open. It is in Fact preferring the continual Pains of Hell to the substantial Joys of Heaven.

Upon the Whole: The Thoughts that I have now communicated, are Realities of the utmost Moment and Concern.—God grant that they may have their due Weight and Influence upon us! May we lock them up in a faithful Remembrance! May we give them chearfully, what they both deserve and demand,—our frequent,
serious,

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serious, and most earnest Attention ! And
may we from henceforth prove them
to be prevailing Motives to a Life of
Piety and unblameable Obedience !—
May we from this Moment make it our
principal Study to please God, and *walk*
worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are
called!—May we be endowed with such
a Portion of Grace as will instruct us to
lament with Sincerity all our former
Sins, apply our best Efforts, for the
future, in that essential Business, for the
due Performance only of which we were
sent into the World, and dedicate the
short Remainder of our Lives to Him
who gave them, and redeemed them !—
And finally ;—may we appear with in-
effable Joy when our *Redeemer shall stand*
at the latter Day upon the Earth;—at that
grand and unutterably important Crisis,
when we shall behold the Curtain of
Time fall, and all Eternity before us ;—
when

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when *the Heavens shall be wrapped up like a Scroll*, and the proud Hearts of innumerable Multitudes, sink within them!—Such *are*, and such I trust, *will ever be*, my fervent and sincere Prayers both for *You*, and for *Myself*.—May God vouchsafe to receive them, for the Sake, and thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour! To whom, with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honor, Glory, and Praise; Might, Majesty, and Dominion; Love, Service, and Obedience, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

F I N I S.

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